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FRANCE



FRANCE

BY

JOHN EDWARD COURTENAY BODLEY

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

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1899

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TO MY SONS
RONALD VICTOR COURTENAY BODLEY
AND
JOSSELIN REGINALD COURTENAY BODLEY
ON THEIR MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

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PREFACE TO NEW EDITION (1899)

THE favour with which this book has been received in England and in Greater Britain strengthens the regret I have always felt at the prevalence of the anonymous system of literary criticism in countries where our language is spoken. My former sentiment was theoretical, and based on the belief that anonymity has spoilt the growth of a great English school of criticism. My new regret is personal, and arises from the thought that I shall never know the names of a hundred generous writers who, all over the Anglo-Saxon world, have lavishly recompensed the labour of many years.

In France, where anonymous criticism is rare, its reception has been no less indulgent; and writers whose names represent all shades of French opinion, have united to welcome these studies of their nation and its institutions from a foreign hand. The French are a sensitive people who justly resent being lectured by strangers, as well-meaning Englishmen sometimes find out. But years of close intimacy with them taught me that if a foreigner, examining their political problems, shows the disposition to look at them from a French standpoint, his most trenchant conclusions rarely give offence. At the same time, his independence of all party creeds and systems in the State gives objective impartiality to his view. Thus my work, essentially critical as it is, has been received in the friendliest spirit even by Frenchmen whose cherished ideas it most candidly criticises.

I am especially sensible of the warm commendation bestowed

on it by Republicans of the Liberal school attached to the Parliamentary tradition. One of their brilliant writers in the *Temps* has well indicated the relations of the author with the people of France :—"La nation Française est, pour lui, comme une belle fille mal habillée. Il l'admire, d'autant plus, de rester admirable. Et chacun sait que les belles filles ne sont point insensibles à cet hommage." The fairest maiden, sure of her native charms, would arm herself like an avenging angel against an admirer who wished to strip her of her attire, if she thought it becoming ; and the sympathetic attitude of a critic would not protect his work if his criticisms were unjustified.

Now meet thy fate, incens'd Belinda cry'd,
And drew a deadly bodkin from her side,¹

might have been the elegy of this book had I mistaken the mood of France. As it is, after the searching scrutiny of French writers, including many who regret my conclusions, there is nothing to alter in this revised edition. The wording of a few passages is strengthened ; a few footnotes are added to amplify illustrations ; but otherwise nothing is changed.

It is with no feeling of complacency that I mention this. For the sake of France I wish that the course of events, since the first publication of this book, had forced me to modify every page which suggests that the Parliamentary Republic is incurably afflicted. But the sincerest apologists of representative government at last recognise that, after a long trial of it, their country is politically in as sad a way as a hundred years ago, when the Directory was darkening the decline of an old century with anarchy. The elections of 1898 sent to the Palais Bourbon the most turbulent and incoherent Chamber of any that the Third Republic has produced. In its usurpation of judicial and executive functions it has treated the principle of the separation of the powers after the manner of a Convention and not of a Parliament. With its violence it has stifled liberty of discussion ; while on its quiet days it has continued a policy of prodigal

¹ The Rape of the Lock, canto v. 87.

finance which is crippling the nation. At last devoted Parliamentarians, some of them taking their text from this book, are ominously rivalling the Reactionaries with schemes of constitutional revision and cries for a strong Executive.

Certain English critics, most amiable to the author, have told him that his sympathy for the French has led him astray, when he contrasts the virtues of a nation with the vices of its representatives and rulers, because "every people has the government it deserves." The maxim is of French origin; but for England to apply it to France in her distress is like a matron, prosperously married and settled, telling a less fortunate sister, whose chosen lord and master has turned out a riotous spend-thrift or an unseemly lunatic, that every woman has the husband she deserves. Without pressing this analogy, I may say that American critics, some of whom have reviewed this book with profound political science, have not cited the aphorism. I do not know if their silence on the point is due to their national experience; but Englishmen who emphasise it, seem to do so not as a scientific observation, but rather as a paraphrase of one of our favourite professions of faith:—"Deus, gratias ago tibi quia non sum sicut ceteri hominum, velut etiam hic Gallus." This traditional self-righteousness, which foreigners of all nations readily impute to us, has somewhat marred the tone of English criticism on the last scandal which has aggravated the malady of the Third Republic. In discussing the Dreyfus case we have the right to boast of our *Habeas Corpus* liberties, and of our distaste for military rule. We have no right to assume an air which insinuates that neither miscarriage of justice nor religious disability has been known in England within living memory.

In connection with that case I have often been asked why Anti-Semitism is not examined in these pages. The reason is that in the original plan of my work on France, of which this is the first part, I decided that Anti-Semitism ought to take its place among religious and quasi-religious questions. As my next volume will deal with the Church and Religion in France, my studies on that complicated and delicate subject will soon be

submitted to the public. Meanwhile I would point out that the peculiar phase which Anti-Semitism has taken in France is not the cause of the present political anarchy but its effect. One may wonder if under an Imperial despotism a French subject would have been condemned with procedure more arbitrary than that which under the Parliamentary Republic doomed the captive of the Devil's Island ; or if an untried prisoner could have been treated more harshly by an autocrat than Colonel Picquart has been with the implied approval of the representative Chamber. One can be certain that under no strong and healthy government, whatever its name, would the life of the nation have been poisoned for years by a passing scandal like the Dreyfus case. That affair, on which I here express no opinion, has envenomed France for the same reason that the Wilson exposure, the Boulangist movement, and the Panama frauds successively demoralised the land. It is for the same reason that a man with an unsound constitution falls desperately ill if he catches an ailment which a robust body shakes off unharmed, while each new attack is aggravated by the debility of his ravaged frame. During the same period military scandals have occurred in Germany affecting high personages, and financial scandals have occurred in England involving politicians. In neither case has the whole community been agitated, these countries having stable governments which suit the temperament of the people.

French Liberals, in their reviews of this book, recognise that their nation is less apt than the English to use representative institutions ; but some of them suggest with that self-depreciation which is the scourge of the French under the Third Republic, that France is accordingly inferior to England. This superstition I tried to lay bare in these pages ; for it is as rampant to-day as when Burke, scanning the Revolution, coupled, in the same unreasoning category, the new fanatics of popular government with the old fanatics of royal prerogative. Aptitude to work well the purely artificial delegation of sovereignty called parliamentary government is a quality which becomes admirable or advantageous only under special circumstances. It is not a

virtue the absence of which degrades a people, as the French may see if they look across the Vosges. Germany, in its united Empire and in its component parts, has a political system of which any school-boy in Laputa could demonstrate the vices. None the less, it has pushed past France to the front rank of nations in the very years of peace in which the French have enjoyed free play for parliamentary experiments.

The greatness or superiority of a nation does not depend on the theoretical principles of its constitution, or we should hail Uruguay and Venezuela as patterns of government for the human race. It depends on the effective sum of the qualities of its people. The form of government beneficially affects the greatness of a nation only in so far as it gives the people scope to exercise and to develop its best qualities; and the parliamentary regime obscures and cripples the finer qualities of the French. Moreover, a representative system must be vicious unless it represents the average elements of excellence in the state. The English Parliament exhibits the merits and not the defects of our nation. A foreigner, who wished to appraise the solid qualities of the British people, would not go far astray if he drew his conclusions from what he witnessed in the House of Commons. It is no longer the legendary envy of Europe. The decay of party organisation, its vital organ, suggests that it has passed its prime, and that the epitaph which posterity may write on the tomb of Mr. Gladstone perhaps will be: "The last great Parliamentarian, he destroyed the Parliamentary system." Yet, on its wane, our Lower House remains a businesslike and serviceable body, usually respectful of authority and tradition, and reflecting the general temper of the people.

A similar stranger in the Chamber of Deputies would be unwise so to judge the French nation from its representatives. Riotous, wasteful, disorderly, delirious, futile, ill-mannered and incoherent are epithets applied by the parliamentarian *Journal des Débats* to the legislators in the last Parliament of the nineteenth century. Peaceable, thrifty, orderly, sober, industrious, polite and methodical are epithets which justly describe a large

proportion of the people whom those Deputies represent. The French are not exempt from human failings, but on the whole, the mass of the people exercise virtues in their daily life which are less cultivated in England. Intemperance, thriftlessness, and the hopeless condition of the poor in our cities are stains on English civilisation which have little counterpart in France, —though insobriety has increased in the Republic in the period wherein the publicans have become the Grand Electors of urban constituencies. Parliamentary proceedings at Westminster usually give no sign that there is a dark side to the picture of national prosperity with which we dazzle the world; while most often the debates in the French Chamber totally disguise the existence of goodness and decency in the land. It is clear that the term “representative” has two distinct meanings when applied to government in England and in France. I therefore submit that I was not wrong in contrasting the virtues of the French people with the defects of their parliamentary institutions.

To those who know the two nations, and who are free from superstitious dogma, it is thus manifest that the inability of the French to enjoy parliamentary institutions does not mark them as inferior to the English. Their inferiority comes from their adherence to a regime which disagrees with them. They will sink lower and lower from the high place among nations to which their qualities entitle them, unless, like their pattern England and their patron Russia, they get a government to suit their national character. France may first have to pass through a troublous stage, for there is no clear alternative before her. To hail as a saviour the wearer of a cocked-hat, or the bearer of a dynastic name will only change one sort of anarchy for another, unless the casual hero has that rare capacity which occasion sometimes reveals and develops.

It has been my practice for some time, to read the letters of Napoleon day by day, on the dates corresponding to those when they were written a century ago. They form a breviary, the daily meditation of which is instructive in these perplexing times. The regular series begins when General Bonaparte became chief of the

Army of Italy in 1795, and in 1799 at the age of twenty-nine he was in command of the expedition in the Orient. It is no mere collection of despatches interesting only to the military student. The psychology of the reconstruction of France is revealed in this correspondence. No matter where he is, camping on the plains of Lombardy, marching through the defiles of Carinthia, waiting for the Mamelukes on the Nile, the marvellous mind of the Corsican is solving not merely problems of strategy, of diplomacy, of commissariat and of promotion. It is watching the events in France, it is studying the human race, it is learning the needs of disorganised Europe. Religion, taxation, laws, commerce, education, administration, are all passed in minute review; and these concise letters, written by a soldier between two battles or on the eve of signing a treaty, contain the germs of the Concordat, the Codes and the administrative system, on which France relies to-day for her orderly governance.

If I speak here of the training which Napoleon imposed on himself before he came forward to end the anarchy of 1799, it is as a warning to those who, in increasing numbers, hope for a repetition of the Coup d'État of Brumaire to restore the health of France. General Boulanger was taunted for being a "Bonaparte without his Arcola and his Rivoli"; but it was not the lack of victories which shattered that wax-work Cæsar. He could not have been more acclaimed than he was if he had won back Alsace and Lorraine;—but he had neither the education nor the character of a ruler of men. A popular General or a Prince of historic name, summoned to sweep away the parliamentary Republic would not stay twelve months at the head of affairs unless his native gifts, disciplined by training, enabled him to display administrative ability of the highest order. When the new saviour of France appears—and it is not evident that the death of M. Faure has revealed him—his task will be less gigantic than that of Napoleon a hundred years ago, as the machinery of autocratic government constructed by the Emperor remains. But it will be harder than that which Louis Bonaparte performed in the middle of this century. The lawyers and

journalists who for twenty years have made ministerial instability a science, are rougher and more artful than the respectable followers of Guizot and of Lamartine with whom the Prince-President had to deal. The destructive adroitness with which they have despatched one another would make short work of an incompetent autocrat.

Such conjectures trench upon the field of political prediction, which is beyond my competence, though I have a liking for Messianic prophecy which takes one beyond the pessimist horizons of modern seers. When I was in England last year I had a conversation with an eminent Tory statesman whose knowledge of European politics is unequalled, and he told me that the state of things in France described in this book was soon to be the fate of other countries, as in the next century Europe would be "a collection of wire-pulling Republics." A major prophet may not be interrogated like a wayside oracle, so I forebore to ask if the foreboding applied to England. But whatever the English people are destined to do with their island kingdom, coming events in France will perhaps delay for a season the complete fulfilment of the Continental portion of the prophecy.

EASTER EVE, 1899.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF 1898

I TAKE this opportunity of rendering my thanks to the many French people of all classes and of all shades of opinion who for more than seven years have in manifold ways helped me in my work. Some of them are mentioned incidentally in the Introductory Chapter, but it would be impossible to name all those to whom I am indebted for ideas, for facilities in pursuing my studies, and for innumerable kind offices. I have to offer my special gratitude to three distinguished Frenchmen who, between them, have found time to read nearly all the proofs of these volumes :—M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the eminent Economist and Member of the Institute; M. Richard Waddington, Senator of the Seine Inférieure, the accomplished historian of the Seven Years' War, whom we can partly claim, as not only was he educated at Rugby like his lamented brother, whom we all knew at Albert Gate, but he was once an officer of our Royal Horse Artillery; and M. Camille Barrère, French Ambassador at Rome, who is equally familiar with our language. It is needless to say that those high authorities are not responsible for any of the opinions expressed in this book, as on important matters of public policy they differ from one another. Their verification of facts and their general criticisms have, however, been of the highest value.

The capital subject of these volumes is Political France after a Century of Revolution. The plan of the work needs little explanation. The Introductory Chapter is not an essential part of it, but it may be of utility, as it contains a description of the


influences encountered by a student of public questions in France. The relations of the great Revolution with modern France are then examined, and this gives an opportunity of a view of certain phases of French life which would otherwise be neglected in a political treatise. The Executive and Legislative Powers are the special matters which form the basis of the remainder of the work. Their operation under the regime which has subsisted in France during the last quarter of the nineteenth century leads to the study of various conceptions which the French have had, during a hundred years of political experiment, of the functions of a Chief of the State and of Parliamentary Institutions. I do not think that I need apologise for having treated those important subjects in minute detail.

In this swift age of handbooks two volumes may seem a slender result of seven years' uninterrupted labour; but those who have seriously studied problems of government will recognise that the time which has been devoted to the questions dealt with here is not excessive. Moreover, I may say that with half the labour expended on these pages I could have produced, three or four years ago, three or four volumes examining much less thoroughly the same subjects. During the final stages of my work I have often realised the profound wisdom of Pascal's famous ending of his sixteenth *Lettre Provinciale*: "Je n'ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n'ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte."

To properly understand the relations of modern France with the Revolution, and the working of French political institutions, it has been necessary to study with careful research a number of subjects referred to only incidentally in these volumes. It, however, seemed better to confine the actual scope of this work to the two themes mentioned above than to add a third volume on the jurisdictions of the great interior departments of the State, which in France survive revolutions and changes of regime. It would needs have been a fragmentary and inexhaustive supplement to a work which I have striven to make as complete as possible; but I have planned another to deal with the Central-

ised Administration, the Church and Education, the Judicial and Fiscal systems, as well as with questions relating to Capital and Labour, to the Colonies and to the Army.

“Diligence and accuracy,” said a great master of our language, “are the only merits which an historical writer can ascribe to himself.” My experience is that an author may with greater confidence vouch for his diligence than for his accuracy, even though he treat not of the dim ages of which Gibbon wrote, but of events in the lifetime of men he has seen or of contemporary laws and practices. The most scrupulous care does not assure perfect immunity from error, as I found out in the attentive revision to which these volumes have been submitted. There was a point of electoral jurisprudence on which the text-books were obscure, and though not of international importance, it is interesting to students of comparative procedure ; so I wrote to a Deputy who is a parliamentary authority to clear it up, and incorporated his answer in my text. Later, being invited by the experienced and intelligent Mayor of a village to be present at a poll over which he presided, I repeated the question to him, and he gave a completely different reply. Finally, I referred it to a Senator, and he demonstrated so clearly that both the Deputy and the Mayor were wrong, that I adopted his version. The incident shows that neither familiarity with a country, nor assiduous care, nor the kindly help of its best-informed inhabitants, can ensure infallibility in a work like this. I hope, however, that errors of fact are not frequent in its pages ; and should any have survived its vigilant emendation I shall be extremely grateful if readers or critics will point them out to me.



A TABLE OF SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF FRANCE SINCE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

- 1789 Opening of the States-General at Versailles, May 5.
The Third Estate resolves itself into a NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, June 17.
Fall of the Bastille, July 14.
Declaration of the Rights of Man, August 20.
- 1790 Division of France into Departments, January 15.
Suppression of titles of nobility and all honorary distinctions, June 19.
Federation on the Champ de Mars, July 14.
- 1791 Death of Mirabeau, April 4.
The flight to Varennes of Louis XVI. and his family, June 20.
The King accepts the Constitution of 1791, September 13.
First meeting of LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, October 1.
- 1792 Sack of the Tuileries, August 10.
Massacres in the prisons of Paris, September 2 and 3.
First meeting of CONVENTION : Battle of Valmy, September 20.
ABOLITION OF THE MONARCHY : Commencement of Republican Era,
September 21.
- 1793 Execution of Louis XVI., January 21.
Beginning of Vendean War.
Fall of the Girondins, May 31.
Revolutionary Calendar came into use September 22.
Execution of Marie Antoinette, October 16.
Bonaparte at the Siege of Toulon, December 19.
- 1794 The Reign of Terror may be considered to have lasted from the arrest
of the Girondins in October 1793 to the fall of Robespierre (9
Thermidor, An II.), July 27, 1794.
- 1795 Suppression of the Revolutionary Tribunal.
Death of Louis XVII. at the Temple, June 12.
Constitution of An III. adopted, August 22.
13 Vendémiaire, An IV. : Bonaparte suppresses the anti-Revolutionary
insurrection in Paris, October 5.

- 1795 Nomination of the DIRECTORY, November 1.
Bonaparte Chief of the Army of Italy.
- 1796 Battles of Castiglione, August 5, and of Arcola, November 15
- 1797 Battle of Rivoli, January 14.
18 Fructidor, An V. : *Coup d'État* of Augereau against the counter-revolution, September 4.
Treaty of Campio Formio (France and Austria), October 17 : Bonaparte returns to Paris, December 5.
- 1798 Egyptian Expedition : Battle of the Pyramids, July 21.
- 1799 Invasion of Syria by Bonaparte : Battles of Mont Thabor, April 16, and of St. Jean d'Acre, May 16.
Bonaparte returns to France : *Coup d'État du* 18 Brumaire, November 9.
BONAPARTE FIRST CONSUL, December 13 : Constitution of An VIII.
- 1800 Administrative reorganisation by Bonaparte.
Battle of Marengo (Austrians), June 14.
Battle of Hohenlinden (Austrians), December 3.
- 1801 Retirement of French from Egypt.
- 1802 Peace of Amiens (England, France, and Spain), March 25.
Ratification of Concordat, and organisation of Public Education.
Bonaparte Consul for 10 years, May 8 ; and for life, August 2.
- 1803 Rupture of the peace with England.
- 1804 Assassination of the Duc d'Enghien, March 21.
Proclamation of EMPIRE, May 18.
Publication of Civil Code.
Preparations to Invade England.
Coronation of Napoleon at Notre Dame, December 2.
- 1805 Napoleon King of Italy, March 18.
Battle of Trafalgar, October 21.
Battle of Austerlitz (Austrians and Russians), December 2 : Treaty of Presburg, December 26.
- 1806 Battle of Jena (Prussians), October 14 : The Continental Blockade.
- 1807 Battle of Eylau (Russians), February 8.
Battle of Friedland (Russians), June 14 : Peace of Tilsit, July 8.
- 1808 Invasion of Spain.
- 1809 Battle of Wagram (Austrians), July 6.
- 1810 Divorce of Josephine : Marriage of Napoleon and the Archduchess Marie Louise, April 1.
- 1811 Birth of the King of Rome, March 20.
- 1812 French reverses in the Peninsula.
Invasion of Russia : Retreat from Moscow began, October 19.
- 1813 Campaign of Germany : Battle of Leipzig (coalition), October 18, 19.

- 1814 Campaign of France : First entry of the Allies in Paris, March 31 :
Abdication of Napoleon, April 11.
FIRST RESTORATION : LOUIS XVIII. enters Paris, May 3.
Opening of Congress of Vienna, November 3.
- 1815 Napoleon lands from Elba at Golfe Jouan, March 1.
Flight of Louis XVIII. ; Arrival of Napoleon in Paris, March 20 :
HUNDRED DAYS.
Battle of Waterloo, June 18.
Second Entry of the Allies in Paris, July 6 : SECOND RESTORATION.
The White Terror.
Arrival of Napoleon at St. Helena, October 13 : Execution of Marshal
Ney, December 7.
- 1820 Assassination of the Duc de Berry, February 13.
Birth of his son the Duc de Bordeaux (Comte de Chambord), Sep-
tember 29.
- 1821 Death of Napoleon at St. Helena, May 5.
- 1823 Action of France with Holy Alliance : Occupation of Spain : Siege of
Trocadero, August 31.
- 1824 Death of Louis XVIII., September 16 : Succession of Comte d'Artois
as CHARLES X.
- 1825 Coronation of Charles X. at Reims
- 1827 Battle of Navarino, September 20.
Fall of the "Ultra" Ministry of M. de Villèle.
- 1828 Moderate Ministry of M. de Martignac.
- 1829 The "Ultras" return to office under M. de Polignac.
- 1830 Invasion of Algiers.
Revolution of July : Abdication of Charles X. : Duc d'Orléans becomes
King of the French.
MONARCHY OF JULY : LOUIS PHILIPPE.
- 1831 Casimir-Périer Ministry.
- 1832 Death of the Duc de Reichstadt (King of Rome).
Ministry of 11th of October (Broglie, Thiers, Guizot).
Arrest of the Duchesse de Berry.
- 1836 Molé Ministry : Arrest of Louis Napoleon at Strasbourg, October 30.
- 1840 Louis Napoleon lands at Boulogne and is imprisoned at Ham.
Soult-Guizot Ministry.
Second Funeral of Napoleon.
- 1842 Death of the Duc d'Orléans, heir to the throne, July 13.
- 1843 The *entente cordiale* between France and England.
- 1844 The Pritchard affair.
- 1846 The Spanish Marriages.
- 1848 Revolution of 24th February : Abdication of Louis Philippe.
THE SECOND REPUBLIC : The Constituent Assembly.

- 1848 Insurrection in Paris : The Days of June.
LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE elected President of the Republic,
December 10.
- 1849 The Legislative Assembly.
- 1851 The *Coup d'État*: The Presidency conferred by plebiscite on Louis
Napoleon for ten years. December 2-28.
- 1852 THE SECOND EMPIRE : Louis Napoleon after a second plebiscite pro-
claimed Emperor as Napoleon III., December 2.
- 1853 Marriage of Napoleon III. with Eugénie de Guzman (de Montijo),
January 30.
- 1854 Crimean War.
- 1856 Birth of the Prince Imperial : Treaty of Paris.
- 1859 Italian War ; Battles of Magenta and Solferino : Peace of Villafranca.
April-July.
- 1860 Treaty of Turin : Cession of Savoy and Nice to France, March 24.
Commercial treaty between England and France.
- 1862 Mexican Expedition.
- 1867-9 Gradual transformation of Government into "Liberal Empire."
- 1870 Plebiscite on the Revised Constitution.
War with Prussia ; Battle of Sedan, September 1 : Fall of the Empire.
THIRD REPUBLIC : Revolution of 4th of September.
Investiture of Paris : Campaign of the Loire.
Surrender of Metz, October 27.
- 1871 Capitulation of Paris, January 28.
Election of National Assembly, which met at Bordeaux February 12.
Signature at Versailles of preliminaries of peace, including cession of
Alsace-Lorraine, February 26.
Entry of Germans in Paris, March 1.
Insurrection of the Commune, March 18.
Treaty of Frankfurt, May 10.
Defeat of Commune and occupation of Paris by Versailles troops,
May 26.
M. THIERS proclaimed "President of the French Republic," August 31.
- 1873 Death of Louis Napoleon, January 9.
Resignation of M. Thiers : MARSHAL MACMAHON President of the
Republic, May 24.
- 1875 Dissolution of the National Assembly after it had voted the CONSTITU-
TION OF 1875.
- 1876 First Elections of Senate and Chamber of Deputies under new Con-
stitution.
- 1877 The Seize Mai.
- 1879 Resignation of Marshal MacMahon : M. GRÉVY President of the
Republic.

- 1879 Death of the Prince Imperial in Zululand, June 1.
The Legislature returned to Paris from Versailles.
- 1880 The Ferry decrees issued relating to religious Orders.
- 1881 Gambetta Prime Minister, November 14 to January 26, 1882 (Le Grand Ministère).
- 1882 Death of Gambetta, December 31.
- 1883 The Second Ferry Ministry, the most durable of all the Ministries of the Republic, held office from February 21, 1883, to March 30, 1885.
Death of the Comte de Chambord, August 24.
- 1884 Partial Revision of the Constitution.
- 1885 Disaster of Lang-Son, March 28.
Re-election of M. Grévy as President of the Republic, December 28.
- 1886 General Boulanger Minister of War, January 1886 to May 1887.
Expulsion of the Princes of families which had reigned over France.
- 1887 Resignation of M. Grévy: M. CARNOT President of the Republic, December 3.
- 1888 Progress of Boulangist movement.
- 1889 Election of General Boulanger as Member for Paris, January 27: his flight from France, April 1.
- 1890 M. de Freycinet Prime Minister for the Fourth time.
- 1892 Exposure of the Panama affair.
- 1893 Visit of the officers of the Russian squadron to Paris.
- 1894 Assassination of M. Carnot: M. CASIMIR-PÉRIER President of the Republic, June 27.
Death of the Comte de Paris, September 8.
- 1895 Captain Dreyfus degraded and transported on the charge of high treason.
Resignation of M. Casimir-Périer: M. FÉLIX FAURE President of the Republic, January 17.
Madagascar attached to the French Colonies, December 12.
- 1896 The Tsar of Russia visited Paris, being the first Sovereign who had come to France as the guest of the Republic. October.
- 1897 The President of the Republic visited the Tsar at St. Petersburg, August.
- 1898 Progress of the Dreyfus agitation.
- 1899 Death of M. Félix Faure: M. LOUBET President of the Republic, February 18.

INTRODUCTION

I

A WRITER who undertakes the study of the institutions and tendencies of a nation not his own, and especially an Englishman who thus turns his attention to France, has before him two great masterpieces, the methods of which it behoves him to observe. The one is the journal of an English traveller in France. The other is the treatise of a French philosopher on an English-speaking community. Though a century has passed since Arthur Young published the record of his rides through France on the eve of the Revolution, it retains all its freshness ; and if he is now only read with curiosity by his countrymen, the French regard him as a classic authority on the outward aspect of their land in the last days of the old regime.¹ Tocqueville's work on the new Democracy of America, which sixty years ago attracted the notice of thinkers of all nations, has little in common with that of the Suffolk squire who had no pretension to abstract science. Arthur Young notes incidentally day by day his impressions on the condition of the people and the political movement imminent among them in a minute inquiry into the state of French agriculture. Tocqueville sets himself the deliberate task of remarking the phenomena arising out of the democratic expansion of the Anglo-Saxon stock. Each undertook his inquest at a momentous stage of the progress of civilisation. The *Travels in France* were completed under a

¹ Throughout this work I have made *régime* an English word : that is to say I spell it without an accent. It has passed into the English language as completely and as indispensably as have *régiment* and *régent* of cognate origin, or as *plébiscite* which like it has retained its French pronunciation in becoming an English term.

regime eight hundred years old, just before the great upheaval, which, in destroying it, convulsed the world. Tocqueville crossed the Atlantic also on the eve of a revolution, less resounding, but of more permanent and widespread effect than that of 1789. Many of the actors in that stupendous drama survived in France, and in America he saw men who had taken part in the War of Independence. It was the roseate morning of the Orleanist dispensation. The French bourgeoisie which had led the revolt against the ancient bondage, had, after forty years' wandering in a series of wildernesses, entered the promised land of statutory monarchy and of middle-class domination. To complete its complacent joy, England, its constitutional pattern, in whose history it had found far-fetched revolutionary antitypes, now followed the lead of France; and 1832, which endowed the British middle-classes with political power, was the echo of the glorious Days of July. But though it was the period of the century when the tradition of the French Revolution was most in favour, its results had produced disillusion in the minds of philosophers who had the power of detaching themselves from superstitious reverence for theories and for doctrines. The nightmare of the Terror was the starting-point of the memories of all the elders of that generation, and those who were born after the reign of the Jacobins had seen with their young eyes the other tangible results of the Revolution—the reconstruction of France by the agency of military despotism; the delivery of the autocratic fabric by foreign conquerors to the heir of divine right, reinstated to deck it as a constitutional figure-head of the English model; the clerical reaction which called forth the Parliamentary Monarchy of the middle-classes. Hence observers like Tocqueville, sceptical of the finality of any successive phase of the Revolution, turned with hope to the Western Continent and its new civilisation untrammelled by a past.

Just as the English squire riding through France could not in his forecast of the coming storm anticipate that its lasting result would be a solid construction of centralised government raised by a too-victorious soldier, so the French philosopher returned from

America convinced that he had seen the land where the social revolution was so simple and uncomplicated that it had nearly attained its limits. A few years later the application of steam-power and electricity was so to transform the conditions of life on that continent, that rapid means of communication and consequent commercial development produced a social revolution greater than that which in the Old World followed the fall of the Bastille and the abolition of privilege. We who stand at the close of the century which has seen the reconstruction of France by Napoleon, and the more momentous changes wrought all over the globe by scientific inventions, which have deprived Europe of its uncontested supremacy as the centre of civilisation, and which in communities, old and young, have raised new social questions and altered the aspect of the eternal struggle between rich and poor; we whose calendars will soon mark the last stage of the second millenary period of the Christian era, may probably witness unexpected phenomena which will even more completely upset the calculations of philosophic observers.

Such considerations ought not to discourage the student of human institutions from minutely analysing the systems of government or the political and social tendencies of his time. They should only deter him from the facile pastime of prophecy which has allured the most cautious of philosophers. No modern publicist is more lucid than Tocqueville, or more suggestive in ideas regarding the development of mankind. Yet when he descends from the vantage ground whence he made his accurate and sagacious observations, he goes as far astray in his predictions as any empiric watching the human movement from an arm-chair. Indeed he recognises the futility of forecast: "Dans le tableau de l'avenir le hasard forme toujours comme le point obscur où l'œil de l'intelligence ne saurait pénétrer."¹

The pages of Tocqueville display the attractiveness of generalisation, a method which was perhaps inevitable in treating of a young democracy without a past. But there would be no excuse for a writer who used it in a treatise on France, the last country

¹ *Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. ii. c. 10.

in the world about which it is possible to generalise. The ignoring of this truth by the men of the Revolution was a leading cause of the anarchy and horror after 1789. None were ever more eloquent in generalities than the Jacobins of the revolutionary assemblies. Superficially equipped with the theories of Rousseau, they evolved from them general principles which unhappily they were in a position to apply to the government of France. We all know what the result was, and how the ruin thus consummated had to be repaired by the hands of the greatest master of detail the world has ever seen. Napoleon had the impartial eye of an alien to discern the nature of the evil. But Voltaire, who knew his countrymen as well as their Corsican protector came to know them, had said that in every section of the nation, in all the relations of life, were found side by side all the contradictions and incompatibilities possible to imagine.¹

The treatise of Tocqueville, moreover, would be more instructive if his illustrations were less fragmentary, and if he disguised less the particulars whereon he bases his conclusions, which sometimes have the air of the dogmatisms of a moralist instead of being the reflections of a diligent traveller. The completely contrary method of Arthur Young has great merits. He, however, had the happy chance of keeping his roving diary at one of the most interesting crises of human history; and a century later a daily record of life in France could, at its best, only furnish a collection of unarranged material for future students. An admirable example of work of this class is a posthumous volume of M. Taine, his *Carnets de voyage*, consisting of notes made in the French provinces, when under the Second Empire he was an itinerant examiner of candidates for St. Cyr. His more finished *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, and his *Voyage en Italie*, show what excellent literature can thus be produced by a master-hand. But this was mere holiday diversion compared with the great work of his life, of which the chief feature is the methodical classification of the results of his research and experience.

These worthy examples of diligence and observation aid the

¹ *Candide*, c. xxii.

plans of a writer who has undertaken the examination of the problems of government and other cognate questions in a nation which is the most complex product of civilisation on the face of the globe. While discarding the method adopted by Arthur Young, the drawbacks of which he modestly sets forth in the first pages of his journal, as I have been led to give exclusively to this work a number of years which few would care to devote to the consideration of a foreign country, I venture briefly to relate how they have been occupied.

II

I came to France in May 1890, and wrote the last lines of this book more than seven years later, having in the interval not spent seven weeks away from French soil, as I had soon perceived that uninterrupted residence in the land was the only means of accomplishing my self-imposed task. In bygone days the French provinces had often attracted my steps: not only haunts of tourists, such as Normandy, Touraine, and Provence, but less familiar ground,—from the industrial region of the north-east, where the factory smoke of Sedan has not yet obscured the traces of the fumes of battle, to Poitiers and Angoulême in the west, where in the vineyards far from the frontier the phylloxera is more dreaded than the ravages of human invaders. Thus when the idea of writing a work on France brought me to live in Paris, I went there not quite as a stranger. In the first months I made or renewed acquaintance with many Parisians of various types and schools of thought, including M. Renan, M. Taine, Comte Albert de Mun, Mgr. Freppel, and M. Clemenceau, A sad thought overshadows the memory of that pleasant summer. Three of the five names I have just written are no longer those of living men; and in the ranks of all whom I have known during my sojourn in France death has made ruthless havoc. Cardinal Manning, without whose affectionate interest my knowledge of certain phases of French life would have been less intimate, said of the projected work, "It is like writing the history of a kaleidoscope." The words have had a meaning not

intended by the venerable Cardinal, who himself has submitted to the kaleidoscopic power which changes the aspect of human society without reference to the vicissitudes of government or the mobility of national temperament.

One who has disappeared of those whom I saw in my early days in France was the British Ambassador to the Republic. Lord Lytton had, in that capacity, some injustice done to his remarkable talents, coming as he did to the Embassy in Paris between two of the most distinguished envoys ever lodged in the hôtel of Pauline Borghese. His predecessor, Lord Lyons, was the ablest professional diplomatist of his time in the English service. His successor, Lord Dufferin, a politician by training, has taken into retirement the fame of the most brilliant representative the Queen has had beyond the seas during her long reign. Lord Lytton had, however, a quality precious in an ambassador to France, possessed by neither of those eminent men, and rarely found in any countryman of ours. In the course of my life I have known the four or five Englishmen reputed to have had the completest acquaintance with France and its people; but the faculty possessed by each of them was akin to the knowledge which an attentive doctor has of a patient. With skill, often painstaking and accurate, they diagnosed the French; but not one of them had that sympathy, in the sense in which the Latin races use the term, cherished by Lord Lytton for the men and women of France. During his mission in Paris it happened that the French Ambassador in London was M. Waddington, who, for different reasons, had an analogous gift of understanding the springs of English action. Both diplomatists were of undeviating loyalty to the lands of their allegiance; but each had the inestimable capacity of discerning the point of view of the people with whom he had to treat. If modern ambassadors held in their hands the issues of peace and war it might promote the calm of Europe, could we always install in the Faubourg St. Honoré a Parisian-minded Briton, while Albert Gate was tenanted by an English public-schoolman who had rowed in a University race.

My first provincial *voyage d'études* I will describe with some detail, to show how I made it my aim from the first to see people of every calling and of every class of the community without distinction of party. It was a happy experience. When wayfaring in France as a tourist the towers of a château seen among the woods from the roadside, or a prefecture standing in its park in a country town, or the modest home of a rural priest beneath the shadow of a church, had always filled me with wondering desire to know what manner of people dwelt within those walls. So having read and imagined much about the lives they led, it would not have been surprising if some disillusion had followed my first entry into this novel society. Nothing of the sort occurred, and the memory of my opening journey as a resident in France is a series of pleasing pictures. During several previous years I had travelled in distant English-speaking lands, studying various phases of the expansion of our race in our own admirable Colonies, and in the United States; but the strenuous impressions brought home from those edifying voyages had not unfitted me to appreciate more restful adventures amid an older civilisation. Even now, when I know the French provinces as few foreigners can know them, the familiar scenes of daily life which meet the casual view give me pleasurable sensations as keen as when I was a passing stranger. A bishop blessing little children in the aisles of his cathedral, a group of white-coifed peasant women in a market-place, or a red-legged regiment swinging through a village to the strains of a bugle-march, has now for me not merely the sentimental or picturesque interest of former days. I know, indeed, that the lives of many of these people are neither ideal nor idyllic. But I recognise now in these provincials, with all their failings, the true force of France which keeps her in the front rank of nations, in spite of the follies, governmental and otherwise, committed in her beautiful capital.

The first prolonged halt on my journey of 1890 was made at Autun. I went there on the invitation of Mgr. Perraud, the learned Academician, who, being in intellect and in character an

ecclesiastic superior to those whom the Republic is wont to honour under the provisions of the Concordat, was made to wait inordinately for his Cardinal's hat. The hours I spent in the old palace of the Dukes of Burgundy, of which Talleyrand was once the episcopal occupant, were more memorable because of the presence of the Bishop's brother. The late Abbé Charles Perraud was the intimate friend of Henri Perreyve, who, the hope of the Church in France, did not attain even the early age at which Pascal died. My copy of his correspondence with Charles Perraud belonged to another and very dissimilar companion of those days at Autun. Mr. Hamerton was then living in the Morvan, in the rural homestead of which English readers well know the charm, and it was an advantage to have his judicious counsel at the outset of my work. Certain phases of life in France he knew better than any natives of the soil, though he retained his English characteristics most remarkably amid domestic surroundings peculiarly French. He was a perfectly unprejudiced observer of the ways of the nation in the midst of which he lived, as befitted a philosopher of original gifts and elevated views.

From Autun I went to Le Creuzot to stay with M. Schneider, the owner of the great iron-works and ordnance factory, whose father was president of the Corps Législatif under Napoleon III. There I carefully studied the conditions of existence in a mining and industrial centre in which the relations of capital and labour are generally harmonious, examining the workmen's dwellings, the schools, and the organisations for the encouragement of thrift. My next visit was a pleasant experience of a very different order. In the hill-country of the Forez, near the upper Loire, I went to see the Vicomte de Meaux, a cultivated historian who was twice a minister under Marshal MacMahon. It was a happy circumstance for an Englishman, that in the first rural château to which he was invited the châtelaine was a daughter of M. de Montalembert, whose admiration for England was such that the judges of the Second Empire sentenced him to imprisonment for his suggestive praises of British rule.

My next stage was Lyons. M. Jules Cambon, afterwards

Governor-General of Algeria and now Ambassador at Washington, was then Préfet of the Rhône. By his obliging kindness I was enabled not only to study the administrative system as organised in the second prefecture of France, but I was put into relations with many of the notables of the great provincial capital who direct the self-governing institutions of which the Lyonnais are proud. The civic hospitals, the savings-banks, the enterprises for housing and for feeding the poor, to say nothing of the religious establishments (some of which the late Cardinal Foulon permitted me to visit), make Lyons one of the most interesting places in Europe, the practical arts being perfected by a population which contains contending elements of mystical fervour and of revolutionary turbulence. From Lyons I visited two other important towns. At Grenoble, the old metropolis of Dauphiny, which has grown into a modern industrial city, I attended the sittings of the Conseil-Général, and was aided in my inquiries by M. Robert, the Préfet of the Isère. At St. Étienne, where the surroundings of toil are less picturesque, I first made acquaintance with French trade-unionists and socialists.

On my way to the eastern frontier I stopped at Bourg-en-Bresse, a typical agricultural centre. Then I went to Besançon, Vesoul, and Épinal, chief towns of departments which are important both for strategic reasons and because of their industrial development due to the immigration from the annexed provinces. Thence I crossed the Vosges into the lost territory, and made an excursion of pathetic interest, the Alsacians whom I met at Strasbourg, Mulhouse, and elsewhere being nearly all of the class passionately devoted to France. After a visit to Belfort, the heroic fragment of the Haut Rhin saved from Germany, I went to Nancy, which, unlike most disenthroned capitals, has preserved a sumptuous air of grandeur. At all the places within the French boundary I had ample opportunity of studying the sentiments of every section of the frontier population,—in visits to republican prefectures and to royalist châteaux, and in frequent intercourse with soldiers and functionaries as well as with permanent denizens of the borderland. Before returning

to Paris by Domrémy and Reims I saw two former Prime Ministers who had little in common except their Vosgean origin and their thankless experience of a statesman's calling in France. M. Jules Ferry lived hard by the frontier at St. Dié, his birth-place, and the electors of his native city had just ejected him from Parliament in return for his services ever since the creation of the Chamber. M. Buffet, spared from such vicissitude by being an irremovable senator, displayed the advantage of the now abrogated system of nomination. Though much older than his republican antagonist, though his ministerial career ended when that of M. Ferry began, and though unlike him he had not the solace of knowing that since his fall France was ruled by his political friends, M. Buffet seemed to take a more buoyant view of life than did his neighbour. The venerable leader of the Reactionaries knew his party too well to have any illusions about its future. But for a student of French institutions it was a privilege to listen to one whose long public career began as a minister in 1848, and I took away some historical lessons of value from the château of Ravenel.

My subsequent journeyings shall be more briefly summarised. After passing some months in Paris I started again early in 1891, returning to Lyons, which contains material for frequent study worthy of the second city of France. Thence I went to Marseilles, and stayed long enough to get a certain insight into the life of the composite population. Crossing to Algeria, during a long visit I was able to examine the peculiar system of administration followed in this quasi-colonial possession, and also the more practical methods of Cardinal Lavigerie's *Pères Blancs*. From this point I had a companion on my travels. We went together as far as the frontier of Tunis, and returned to France by way of Corsica, exploring a large portion of the island which, after Great Britain, has had more influence on the destinies of modern Europe than any other insular fragment of that continent.

After a brief summer season in Paris we set out for the west, visiting the cities of Le Mans, Angers, and Vannes. There in the Morbihan the Comte de Mun met us, and under his amiable

guidance we had many glimpses of Breton life rarely accorded to strangers. In hospitable châteaux and in village presbyteries, at *pardons* and at horse-fairs, in fishing hamlets and in moorland towns, our surroundings made it hard to realise that we were living among the subjects of a Republic; for the Encyclical referring to that state of things, which the next year dismayed Catholic and Royalist Brittany, was not yet delivered to the printer of the Vatican.

We travelled slowly by Nantes and La Rochelle to Bordeaux, an attractive city, where a genial commerce promotes proficiency in the art of living. From the vine-country we passed to the Landes, a region so sequestered that the kindly inhabitants regard even the Bordelais as strangers. Then several Pyrenean towns were visited, including Lourdes, which for a student is one of the most interesting places in Europe a century after the installation of the cult of Reason on the altar of Notre Dame. We advanced into Languedoc as far as Carcassonne, taking away pleasant memories of home life in remote châteaux, of which the inmates disdain the distant joys of Paris, and go for their winter season to Toulouse. We had already halted in that exuberant city, so turning north we came to Limoges,—an example of how in France the prosperity of a smoky trade does not deface the landscape. Then we drove through George Sand's country, lingering in many a forgotten town and village in the Creuse and the Indre which were household words fifty years ago, and so we came to the capital of the Berry. Apart from its ecclesiastical and industrial features, Bourges presented a phenomenon which, outside Paris and away from the Alpes Maritimes and from other resorts of tourists, I have rarely encountered on my travels in France—we met an Englishman. It is true he had for his singular enterprise the excuse of a special mission, the explorer being Sir Frederick Leighton, who was studying cathedral architecture in the preparation of an academical address.

The circumstances of my life now made prolonged journeys somewhat difficult; so, with the exception of visits to Chartres

and other places near the capital, I remained in Paris till the summer of 1892. It now seemed more advantageous to choose a provincial neighbourhood for a residence of some months than to be perpetually roving. Travelling, indeed, is most essential to gain a general view of a country, and to compare the tendencies and sentiments of the populations. But it is also necessary to live quietly among the people in order to observe at leisure their daily life. Moreover, for studying the uniform institutions of France one locality serves just as well as another. The centralised administration and the educational system, the clergy and the magistracy, are organised on identical lines in Touraine and in Provence. The chief town of a department, of an arrondissement, or of a canton, or a simple commune, provides precisely the same material for study in Gascony as in Champagne,—or indeed in Algeria, a fact which I realised during my first visit to that dependency when attending a meeting of a rural municipal council. The formalities of the proceedings, the nature of the business, to say nothing of the physiognomy and the diction of the councillors, gave the illusion that the village was in the vicinity of Marseilles or of Cette rather than of a colonial city in Africa.

By good fortune I mentioned my idea to M. Taine, and with his aid I found a house near his home on the Lake of Annecy. Before another summer came the great critic and philosopher was laid to rest by the waterside, and already declining health had limited his attractive powers of intercourse. But the form of my work was considerably influenced by his conversations, while an agreeable intimacy with his family gave me a valuable insight into his method of study. After this memorable sojourn of three months in the Haute Savoie I visited Lyons for the third time, and thence we descended the Rhône by boat, halting at Vienne, Valence, and Avignon. We then stayed for some time at Montpellier, which, with its learned Faculties, has the air of a University town. During this southern tour of exceptional interest we called at Rodez and Montauban, and had some varied experience of country-house life in the Aveyron and the Landes; while I

followed my usual plan of seeing people of every description, from reactionary bishops to anti-clerical professors. Returning to Paris we paid some visits in the châteaux near the capital, thus ending the year in Seine-et-Oise with the late Duc de Rohan. If I name that lamented gentleman of the old school, it is not merely as a tribute of friendship, but because he was in my experience the last survivor of his class who had retained a savour of the ancient regime. He had been brought up among the men and women of the Emigration who had taken part in the diversions of the Court of Louis XVI., and who imparted to the children of the Restoration a lingering trace of that charm of manner whereof the eighteenth century had the secret.

Of the places visited in the next two years a bare enumeration must suffice, which can give no idea of the ever-varying charm of travel on French soil. The spring of 1893 we spent on the Mediterranean, quitting the tourist track and seeing many unfamiliar places. We went inland by way of Aix, and from Arles traversed the Camargue, exploring the Dead Cities of the Gulf of Lyons, in one of which, Aigues Mortes, modern social questions are discussed with lively emphasis. At Nîmes I saw something of the Protestants who have their chief seat here. Thence we went through the Cevennes to Le Puy, and through Auvergne to Clermont Ferrand. That summer we passed on the shores of the Gironde, described by Michelet in *La Mer*, where another French Protestant population survives in the Huguenot settlements of Saintonge. It was here that I witnessed the general elections. Early in 1894 we revisited Algeria, and on our return made a tour in Burgundy before going to the Chablais for the summer. The shores of Léman are not far from Annecy, so we went to stay in the home of M. Taine at Menthon St. Bernard. There in his library, untouched since he left it, among his annotated books, I was able better than ever to realise the industry and research with which he had pursued the study of the origins of modern France. I paid a fourth visit to Lyons, and then spent a month in country houses in the Charollais, in an interesting district on the borders of a great

mining basin and of an agricultural country. I thus visited Paray-le-Monial, where the devout inhabitants accept with joy the decision of the Holy See that it is not an article of faith to believe in the prodigies of Lourdes, which have eclipsed the more venerable shrine of Marie Alacocque. Thence I went to Dijon to inspect the military quarters in that city of valiant renown during the Prussian invasion. We remained in Paris till the spring of 1895, when we made a new series of tours in the Nivernais, in Touraine, and in Picardy.

Paris had now been my home for five years, and I had steadily pursued my task to the exclusion of all other occupation ; but I was not quite satisfied with its progress. From each provincial journey I had brought back a mass of information, and in Paris I was never idle ; but the writing accomplished there displayed an inharmonious contrast in tone to the studies made in the tranquil air of the provinces. A foreigner who lives in Paris, and who frequents the dissimilar circles of its society, cannot escape the agitating influence of conflicting coteries. Paris still contains the material for the most attractive society in the world. Unhappily it is so disorganised, so split up into sections, and so modified by the pleasure-seeking cosmopolitan element, that socially the brilliant city is losing its character of a great metropolis. The fashionable class has no relations with the governing class, and the men of genius, wit, and intellect have little dealings with either. Here and there the border-land between the various groups is indistinct ; but generally speaking, fashion, politics, and culture rarely meet on common ground. If a stranger express his regret at this state of things he is told that it is inevitable. The triflers reprobate the morals of politicians. The politicians disparage the mental faculties of the fashionable. The workers and thinkers who, in spite of the others, maintain the prestige of France, more quietly disdain both categories which between them have destroyed the great glory of French society, the salon. Moreover, in Paris one sees too many newspapers ; and as publicists of the boulevards are wont to revile in rude language their fellow-countrymen who do

not agree with them, the enjoyment of an unlicensed press is apt to distort a stranger's ideas of the people of the land.

Paris, again, though one never looks at a newspaper or sets foot in society, is a distracting and seductive city, even in these days when the march of civilisation is trampling down much of its old characteristic. There is no place on the globe where it is so easy to imagine that a day of sauntering has been fruitful in good work. A morning spent on the Quays in search of a serious book, an afternoon passed in a studio listening to theories, may familiarise a stranger with the ways of the land of his sojourn; but they do not speed him in the progress of *un travail de longue haleine*—to use an expressive phrase which shows that the French understand the conditions of successful effort. For it is to be noted that Paris has not this laxative effect on the Parisian inured to its atmosphere. A felicitous discourse of M. Renan's had for its text the query, "Peut-on travailler en province?" Yet though he took eloquent pains to prove to his audience at the Sorbonne that inability to perform intellectual work in the provinces was a fallacy born of the centralising heritage of the Revolution, he never availed himself, save at holiday times, of the provincial advantages which he extolled, and I do not think that it was his Hebrew Chair at the Collège de France which bound him to the capital. Among his surviving colleagues at the Institute, the variety of French genius has never been more signally displayed than by M. Ludovic Halévy and M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, and both of these eminent authors have assured me that it is in Paris that their powers of production are most active. It is among the smiling lawns which skirt the Bois de Boulogne that the grave economist proves his worthiness to be the compatriot of Bastiat and the kinsman of Michel Chevalier; while the sombre slopes of Montmartre have inspired the creator of Madame Cardinal to add to the gaiety of nations. But the atmosphere of Paris equally pervades those dissimilar quarters.

Though M. Halévy once courted his muse in the suburban groves of St. Germain, I can testify that amid rural scenes he

ceased to be a writer, for he was my neighbour for two pleasant summers. Not being a Parisian I was beset by the conviction that to accomplish my work I must find a place removed from influences which disturbed its unremitting pursuit, and we found it in the Brie hard by the domain of the amiable Academician. It was a château built in the last days of Louis XIII., with all the architectural grace of that stately epoch. In the next century it acquired some literary associations, as its woods adjoined those of Grandval, and the guests of Baron d'Holbach sometimes came that way, as Diderot recorded in his letters to Mlle. Voland. It was thus almost within sight of the capital, so uninterrupted work was possible without the isolation of enforced solitude. The provincial excursions were not wholly abandoned. Once we went to Poitou, driving through the Vendée and the Deux Sèvres, and another time we visited Normandy; but for the greater part of two years I rarely left my writing.

The book was not, however, finished there. Compelled to winter in the south, I went to Nice, being the first foreigner in the cognisance of the Préfet of the Alpes Maritimes who, since the annexation, had chosen that garish cosmopolis for a sojourn because of its administrative attractions as a *Chef-lieu de Département*. I had my reward in witnessing some interesting phases of French local government,—notably when that accomplished agent of the Republic, M. Henry, who has since been promoted to be its Minister at Bukharest, issued a proclamation, in which, citing Napoleon's Decree of Messidor, he forbade all public officials, from the clergy to the magistracy, to attend the New Year's reception of the mayor, as the elect of popular suffrage had affronted the representative of centralised authority. It was a striking corroboration of what I have suggested more than once in the following pages, that under every regime, Republican or Monarchical, autocratic or parliamentary, the civic life of the nation is regulated by the durable machinery of the Napoleonic settlement. The following spring I sought other practical means of verifying the contents of this work in the course of a long driving tour through the Basses Alpes, the

Hautes Alpes, and the Isère. It was completed near Chambéry, almost within sight of Les Charmettes, where Rousseau first studied philosophy with consequences which changed the destinies of France. The final touches were given to these pages in the library of the château of Valençay, among the memorials collected by Talleyrand of each stage of the reconstruction of France, just as he had left them sixty years before.

III

It was M. Taine who first represented to me the magnitude of my task, relating his own experiences with his *Origines de la France contemporaine*, which, conceived in his early manhood, were still unfinished forty years later. Before I realised the nature of the enterprise my idea was to live in Paris for a year or so in the intervals of provincial tours, and to finish the work in England,—a plan so unpractical for the study of a complex society, with its deluding surface of symmetrical institutions, that one short summer excursion would have better qualified me for it. Mr. Hamerton, from his experience, gave me some sound advice on this point. "There are two moments," he said, "for writing : one when the writer knows nothing about his subject (which is the time often chosen by travellers for composing their descriptive works), and the other when he knows a great deal. In the intermediate stage, if he is acquiring knowledge, its acquisition destroys the confidence which he had before learning, and which he can only retrieve after having learned." Not that a stranger's first ideas of a country are to be despised, if only he will not parade them as a definite and weighty judgment. A new-comer is often struck with characteristics which, apparent to his superficial view, soon evade the notice of the most observant student as the land and its people become familiar to him. A writer is wise, therefore, to note early impressions, as they indicate the points on which his countrymen need information.

There is another objection to studying in a limited period a nation like France, with its conflicting institutions and its profound

internal divisions. A non-resident traveller who examines a strange country must needs be dependent on the polite inhabitants who display to him its features. He cannot help being affected by the opinion of his guides. Or, if he takes an independent view, he feels bound to modify it so as not to rudely oppose that of his hosts, who on their part communicate, without intentional insincerity, a conventional or highly-coloured impression not quite in accordance with their own belief. The impartial wayfarer who frequents antagonistic circles of society, especially in a land where the breaches between them are impassable, is not in much better case. With two sets of friends whose prejudices he wishes to respect, he sums up the cases of rival advocates with judicial inconclusiveness. English authors who write treatises on English-speaking communities are not subject to this disadvantage, as a Briton who goes to the British Colonies or to the United States possesses on landing, in instinct, education, and language, the equivalent of a long residence in a foreign country. There are, however, certain monographs published on the Continent on English institutions which, though painstaking and interesting, are too clearly the reflection of the opinions of the authors' English friends to be valuable as works of reference or as essays in philosophy.

A writer who sets himself to examine a foreign country may compare himself with one commissioned to investigate the working of a great railway company. Such an one, if he wished his report to be of value, would not be satisfied with a few picturesque journeys over the smoothest portions of the line in the comfortable saloon of the directors, who with personal attention further facilitated the inquiry. Still less would he content himself with the opinions of discharged officers of the company, exponents of a contrary system of management, or of malcontent shareholders who wished to change the directorate. He would assiduously utilise all those means of information, but he would supplement them with a searching independent inquiry. He would explore the line in all directions, not disdaining the humblest class of conveyance or the slowest trains. He would

elicit from his fellow-passengers their travelling experiences and interrogate the servants of the company. He would ascertain the frequency and the gravity of accidents ; the standard of punctuality observed ; the tariff of fares and of freights ; the condition of the rolling stock and of the permanent way ; the wages paid to workpeople ;—taking care to compare all his private information with official documents. Such an inquest would require time, patience, and diligence ; yet it would be a mere holiday task by the side of an investigation into the functions and working of the institutions of a great nation.

If I had confined myself to a few instructive tours, alternating sojourns in anti-republican châteaux with visits to provincial towns to see the authorities of the Republic, I should have got some vivid impressions of contradictory phases of French life, auxiliary to my sedentary studies, without acquiring a competent knowledge of France. An itinerant in a strange land, whether lodged in an inn or beneath a hospitable roof, has no real experience of the working of its institutions. The government of the country, the administrative, judicial, and fiscal systems, although he has glimpses of their machinery and hears much of their advantages or inconveniences, have no practical purport for him. They only become realities to the student who submits himself to the conditions of existence of the people he is studying. Then as a householder, a tax-payer, or if needs be as a litigant, in unrestricted and unfavoured commerce with all classes of the population, he can turn to profit the daily incidents of life, or even its vexations. As for the latter, the wheels of civic existence turn smoothly in France for the law-abiding and the unagitated. All nations have their self-imposed crosses to bear. The French complain, with some reason as we shall see, that they are eaten up by functionaries ; but the scourge is not so devastating or so palpably useless as that of the lawyers who eat us up in England. The incidence of taxation oppresses French citizens ; but, save for the limited class which has direct dealings with the municipal octroi, its payment is a joy compared with the harassing process which tax-payers, imperial and local, have to endure in the United Kingdom.

IV

While the business of everyday life thus tends to give the foreign settler a favourable impression of the country, there is a contrary influence abroad in France to which a resident is more exposed than a passer-by. The *esprit critique* which made the French Revolution has never ceased to be active ; but under the Third Republic it has taken the form of pessimism, acute and contagious, affecting every portion of the nation, excepting that which goes resolutely about its daily work without troubling to think whether France is ill or well governed, or what is the precise nature of her prestige among the powers of Europe. The phenomenon is so striking that it is necessary to consider its causes. Those adduced do not adequately explain the affliction of a large proportion of the sanguine French nation with a malady resembling that which their wits used to impute to the splenetic denizens of our fog-bound island.

France is not the only country stricken with pessimism at the end of the nineteenth century. The disease now follows in the trail of civilisation, ravaging communities irrespective of their racial origin or system of government. It has infected individuals ever since the world began ; but the epidemic form in which we know it is so recent that its name was not recognised as a French word till forty years after the Revolution. To judge from what has occurred since that neologism was moulded, increased rapidity of communication and other scientific improvements, excepting those connected with the healing art, will not increase the sum of human happiness. Their primary effect is to destroy repose and to agitate, thus inducing nervous tension, which is the physical cause of most phases of hypochondria. France has not had to submit to such neurotic influences more than other lands, so there the advantages of civilisation are not the special cause of the inordinate growth of pessimism. Moreover, in other respects, civilised progress has had less depressing results in France than elsewhere. We do not find there, for instance, any counterpart of the hopeless misery of the poor of our English cities, which has been aggravated to a

degree unknown in other communities by the congestion of population owing to locomotive faculties, as well as by the substitution of machinery for manual labour. The social question is serious in France, but it does not present any such sombre pictures of extreme suffering calculated to deject the view of those disposed to gloom. Thus French pessimism cannot be regarded as merely a symptom of the universal malady of the age, and there are peculiar causes which give to the nation its predisposition, unnatural to its temperament, to contract inordinately the dolorous contagion.

The special cause of pessimism in France in the last generation of the century is usually said to be the disastrous issue of the war with Prussia. Witnesses who are old enough to have known France before 1870, natives as well as foreigners, declare that the immediate effect of the German victory was the disappearance of certain charming qualities which till then had characterised the French nation. The gaiety, the genial sociability, the politeness of the people, which made their capital the most attractive collection of human beings in Europe, were all crushed in the fatal nine months between the Battle of Wörth and the Treaty of Frankfort. France, they say, came out of that struggle like a man who, blithe, expansive, and prosperous, is smitten with an illness which leaves him prematurely old, peevish, and suspicious, as well as damaged in fortune and bereaved in his affections. Those who had not reached manhood when that transformation took place can judge of its extent only from oral or written tradition. While it seems certain that France was a land of greater amenity under the Second Empire than under the Third Republic, and while no one can doubt the distressing moral effect on the nation of defeat and loss of territory, a close study of the people and their history convinces that the contrast thus depicted is too indiscriminate. As for the simile of the man broken with sickness, nations are happier than mortals in being able perpetually to renew their forces. This is emphatically true of a race as buoyant as the French, and on the morrow of their reverses they left on record manifestations of their swift recuperative power.

The literature of that period contains little trace of being the production of a people in mourning, and it is notably free from the ill-conditioned pessimism which blemishes, as the French recognise with regret, much of their work in the third decade after the war. The drama in France is the reflection of the feelings and tendencies in the nation. If we examine the pieces written at this epoch by Dumas fils, whom the highest authorities regard as an unerring guide in this respect,¹ we find his Frenchmen and Frenchwomen who discussed subtle problems on the boards of the Théâtre Français after the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, not more solemn than those whom he put on the stage of the Gymnase in the light-hearted days of the Second Empire. One of his brilliant successors, M. Pailleron, made his fame with a play written in the early years of the Republic; but the life-like creatures who people *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*, whatever their vanities or their charms, are not a band of morose cynics like the miscreants, political and fashionable, who monopolise the scenes of French comedy at the end of the century. In fiction, Octave Feuillet's heroes and heroines were as romantic after Sedan as in the days when he spent the intervals of composing in the gay circle at Compiègne and at Fontainebleau; but, though in losing his Imperial protectors he had more personal reason for gloom than perhaps any other writer, his creations after the war evinced none of the dyspeptic despondency of the unwholesome characters of the analytical school who have now taken possession of French romance.

If imaginative literature reflects the particular temperament of the writer as well as the spirit of the age, there is another source of evidence free from that confusion. The debates of the National Assembly from 1871 to 1875 are entirely dissimilar in tone to those of the Chamber of Deputies in the third decade of the Republic. Under the presidencies of M. Carnot and M. Faure scepticism and violence have been the dominant notes of parliamentary eloquence. Under M. Thiers and Marshal MacMahon, though party strife was bitter, the language of the deputies showed

¹ See p. 507.

that while there was keen dissension as to who should be entrusted with the government of France, all men were inspired with a dignified hope for the destinies of their country. This tone is apparent even in the inquiry conducted by the Assembly into the tragic story of the National Defence. Personal recrimination was sometimes heard ; for a dire heritage of the great Revolution is the inability of the French to sink internecine discord in the face of public tribulation. But the men of all professions and parties who deposed to the causes of disaster were hopeful rather than downcast, and as we read their testimony we say "these are the sons of a great nation who know how to profit from the lessons of adversity." Yet the Prussian was still encamped within their borders ; the ravage of siege and of battle was unrepaired ; the streets were black with mourners for those who had fallen in defeat ; and France, without even a settled government, was not only mutilated but isolated. After a quarter of a century of prosperous peace, with a form of government so undisputed that it is the most stable of those enjoyed by France for over a hundred years, in the period which has brought her into close amity with another great power, we must avoid perusing the utterances of her public men in Parliament and in the press if we would retain unimpaired our belief in the grandeur of the French.

We may be told that the pessimism of the century's end is due to the fact that the generation maturing in it got its first impressions in the dark days of defeat, so that all those born or adolescent at that epoch had their fancy tainted with images of gloom. The theory might be plausible if an intemperate cult of the serious were a feature of modern French pessimism, or if 1870 were the first year in which France had suffered disaster. There never was a season when the spirit of the nation was merrier than under the Restoration after the invasions which deprived it of its revolutionary spoils. The removal of the nightmare of war and carnage with which Napoleon had oppressed France was enough to cause a reaction of gaiety in the first years of relief ; but as time went on without any renewal

of national glories, depression did not fall upon the people. Twenty-seven years, which lie between us and the battle of Sedan, form a large span in the life of a nation, and especially of modern France. Only twenty-seven years divide 1788 from 1815. In the former year Bonaparte was a needy subaltern at Auxonne in the service of Louis XVI., anxious for his mother struggling to support her children at Ajaccio. In the latter he landed at St. Helena, having in the interval made an emperor of himself and kings of the Corsican orphans, having changed all the frontiers of Europe, and, with more durable effect, having reconstructed France. The like space of time which followed his disappearance was less crowded. Instead of nine or ten changes of constitution or regime there was only one, the Revolution of July, so France had leisure to brood over the ills of 1815. Yet the middle period of Louis Philippe's reign was never excelled for the healthy and gladdening tone both of literature and of opinion. The national thirst for glory was not extinct, as the Orleanists found out in the ominous enthusiasm evoked by the second burial of Napoleon. Moreover, despondency and discontent existed then as they always do. But when Alfred de Musset bemoaned his conception between two battles, and suggested that the melancholy of his age bore the stamp of the agitating events which had surrounded a childhood whereof Waterloo was the earliest tradition, his contemporaries, not so afflicted, ascribed his distemper to the influence, moral and literary, of Byron, rather than to the political visions which haunted his cradle.

The loss of Alsace-Lorraine, an integral part of the old realm, no doubt weighed more heavily on French hearts than the retrocession of the spoils of war after the fall of Napoleon; but it is not the cause of the pessimism of to-day. M. Jules Claretie, when visiting the conquerors of the lost territory, wrote, "Twenty-seven years have passed, and our domestic brawls, insults, and animosities have thrust out of sight our simple and patriotic hopes of regeneration and revenge." The observant Academician is an ardent Republican who tries to make the best

of the regime, so his reflections which the sight of Berlin inspired are valuable. The rancorous discord in French public life is a persistent source of the malady which has a more depressing effect than the distant memory of a sharp grief; and the steady growth of pessimism is a sure sign that there is something essentially wrong in the government of the country. The root of the ill is to be found not in its Republican form, though the democratic basis of that regime extends the area of the evil. It lies in the parliamentary system.

While it is an uncongenial task for an Englishman to condemn the parliamentary institutions of any community, the day is past when an inability to appreciate them would be imputed to a people as a reproach. Even in the heyday of superstitious belief in the oecumenical utility of British institutions, the political educator, who later was adopted in that capacity by the nation which invented parliaments, sounded an audacious note of scepticism. "‘I go to a land,’ said Tancred, ‘that has never been blessed by that fatal drollery called a representative government, though Omniscience once deigned to trace out the polity which should rule it.’" Mr. Disraeli, when he thus delivered himself in the Asiatic romance which he studded with his personal opinions, was a member of the House of Commons, and as he had a profound faith in his future domination over that body, he was by anticipation ungrateful for the fame he found there. His peculiar genius would not have reached so lofty an eminence in any other sphere. He was not an administrator, never once as a minister undertaking the drudgery of a departmental headship; nor is it easy to fancy him in holy orders competing for the chair of St. Augustine. As an ambassador he might have shone,—but at an earlier epoch, when effulgence was encouraged in embassies. As a novelist he was incomparable, yet he failed to touch popular fancy. The House of Commons was his destined arena. Hence the estimate of this great member of Parliament, who was, moreover, endowed with the cosmopolitan instinct of his race, is useful to recall, when France, having made an unexampled trial

of parliamentary government, has found it to be, in the words of its consummate master, "a fatal drollery."

Previous French experiments in representative institutions were always too short-lived, being abbreviated by revolution, and were founded on too artificial a basis to afford material for judgment. But under the Third Republic they have been tried during a period of perfect peace and domestic tranquillity on a democratic foundation, under the most durable regime of the century which has never had a serious rival. Out of these favouring circumstances the parliamentary system has emerged irretrievably discredited. The temperament of the French people is not the sole cause of its failure. A fundamental obstacle to thwart its working is its combination with a centralised administration constructed to be manipulated by one strong hand, and, instead of modifying the defects of centralisation, parliamentary government aggravates them. The fatal incompatibility has been carefully studied in these pages, and one only of its results need be mentioned here. An essential feature of a centralised bureaucracy is the profusion of offices held directly from the State; and the French have found out that whatever the evil of vesting their patronage in a strong central power, it is more harmful to the commonwealth to transfer it to the elected representatives of the nation. For, as we shall see, each member of Parliament, not hostile to the Government, thus becomes a wholesale dispenser of places, controlling the administrative and fiscal services in his constituency, and supervising the promotion of the judges. Moreover, to augment his popularity a legislator likes to have as many posts as possible to bestow. The tendency of representative government is, therefore, to effect not economy, but the multiplication of state-paid offices, ruining the finances of the country, and turning the industrious French people into a nation of needy place-hunters. Under previous parliamentary regimes this evil was not patent, as the electorate was extremely limited, and if every voter in France had been given a post under Louis Philippe the bureaucracy would not have been unduly swollen. Whereas

with ten million constituents encouraged to regard their members in this light, the rich resources of the land are strained, and citizens are taken away from callings which increase the national riches, are deterred from colonial enterprise, and are generally diverted from ambitious pursuits which elevate the standard of a nation.

An Englishman who observes this sad state of things, and the depressing effect it has on some of the most enlightened thinkers in France, exclaims: "But why not do away with your centralised system, and give parliamentary government a chance?" The reply is, that if the Napoleonic fabric of centralisation, which has survived all the vicissitudes of the century, were demolished, it would bring down with it every institution in France with havoc more ruinous than that of 1789; and, to build another structure, another Napoleon would be needed. It may be that he planned his reconstruction on wrong lines, as M. Taine objects, and instead of strengthening the centralising features of the old regime he would have done better to strew the land with autonomic institutions. But on his return from Egypt in 1799, ten years of revolution had made anarchy and chaos so complete that his genius alone could have saved the integral existence of France. Moreover when mortals are endowed with superhuman power, on rare occasions in the world's history, they are not mild doctrinaires; nor would they be able to cope with the crises which produce them were their qualities those which befit benign constitutional organisers. It is, however, futile to dream of what Napoleon might have done, especially as subsequent events indicate that autonomic institutions would not have suited the French; while it is certain that the centralised system does conform to their wants and ideas. Proofs of this fact abound.

In the first place, while several times in the century the French have overturned dynasties and engaged in civil war, when the fray was over and the new regime set up, though the Government of the country was manned entirely with opponents of the previous dispensation, a material change was never

essayed in the essential fabric of the Napoleonic construction. Secondly, though treatises on decentralisation abound in France, they show that the boldest practical conceptions of reform leave the centralised system untouched, from our English point of view. They call to mind those radical schemes for reorganising our public offices at Whitehall, which new ministers with ingenuous zeal sometimes promote. Three superfluous clerks are made to retire on full pay; three other clerks have their salaries raised to reward their increased labours, and the next year three new clerks are introduced to complete the old establishment. On a gigantic scale, such are the lines on which daring decentralisers in France would remodel the bureaucracy.

In the third place, the scant interest taken by French citizens in the important local governing bodies which they possess, shows that the majority like to depend on the central power for their administration. Here and there a population, as at Bordeaux, is inspired with an independent municipal sentiment. In other localities, as at Marseilles, the presence of Socialists or other politicians of vivacious manners at a council board attracts attention to its superficial proceedings. But the undertaking of projects which may possibly add to the weal of the community, and will certainly augment its taxation, is regarded with indifference. While writing these introductory pages I attended the opening session of the Conseil-Général in a provincial capital. Its public spirit had been roused the previous week by a state visit of the President of the Republic, who had decorated with the national Order two of the members of the Council; so the inaugural addresses of the Chairman and of the Préfet, recording the honour paid to the departmental assembly, contained matter of more special interest than the usual financial exposition. But tax-payer and admiring fellow-citizen alike remained unstirred. Five unofficial spectators alone were attracted to the prefecture. Two of them were reporters, two were experts employed in a technical matter, and the uncompelled audience consisted of one member of the public who was a stranger to the department and to France.

A fourth sign of the suitability of the centralised system to the French temperament is that not only it provokes no popular opposition, but its existence is approved by almost every Frenchman of eminence of the great class which takes no part in politics, and which brings the highest credit on the nation. Philosophers and artists, men of science and men of business, of various views on social and ecclesiastical questions, are generally unanimous in holding that the centralised fabric is necessary to the existence of France as a tranquil country in which art, letters, research, or riches may be pursued. Before coming to France my native prejudices against the principle of centralisation had been modified by experience at the Local Government Board, where I had seen how salutary was the effect of a centralised control over elective authorities when exercised by impartial officials of high character. But that is a gentle form of centralisation, not incompatible with representative government, and an Englishman has an ingrained difficulty in conceiving a free community unblessed by parliamentary institutions; so when my observation persuaded me of their incompatibility with the French administrative system, I was perpetually pondering if it were possible for the latter to be decentralised so as to work healthily under Parliament.

It sometimes happens, in all branches of inquiry, that a casual conversation has more influence on the final judgment of an investigator than his most assiduous studies and reflections. Constantly revolving this problem in my mind, one summer evening I strolled up from the Seine to Meudon to see M. Janssen and his famous observatory. Astronomers are no longer consulted, as in days of old, on questions of government; though, if it be true that certain political sciences have been relegated to the planets, we shall have recourse again to their open vision. Here, however, there was a special reason why our talk turned to the terrestrial subject of centralised institutions. I had first met M. Janssen at Lyons, within sight of the summit of Mont Blanc, on which he has placed his intrepid post of observation, and he had come to aid a movement, favoured in that city,

towards "University decentralisation." The idea, the practical progress of which I hope to deal with one day, is not revolutionary. Its aim is the creation in the provinces of establishments of Superior Education which will check the migration of the youth of France to Paris; and the foundation of Universities independent of the Ministry of Public Instruction is not contemplated. The retention of this jurisdiction led us to speak of the general principle of centralisation, and the venerable savant, himself a decentraliser, declared with strong emphasis that the system of supervision exercised by the capital on the local government of the country was the essential power which kept France together. I recalled that on the occasion when he came to Lyons, I had said to M. Jules Cambon, then Préfet of the Rhône, and now an ambassador of the Republic, that amid my admiration for the organisation over which he presided, the thought surged up that if a British civil servant of his eminence were sent to administer Manchester as the political agent of the Government of the Queen, that loyal city would be in insurrection in a week. But I also remembered to have seen the Préfet surrounded by the leading citizens of Lyons, distinguished men who devote their lives to the local institutions of the second town of France, the independent spirit of which is their pride. If therefore a great civic population, composed of conflicting elements, accept complacently the governance of an imposed authority, it is clear that the system is in accordance with the sentiments of the community. As we descended from Meudon the reflection of the setting sun on the panorama of Paris gave the illusion that its monuments were in flame, and called to mind the summer night of 1871, when the terrified dwellers on these heights looked down upon the incendiary work of apostles of local autonomy, which was not calculated to encourage in France essays in decentralised government.

The combination of parliamentary government with centralisation is a potent cause of the pessimism of French political writers. They see that the general result is unsatisfactory, and that some of the chief elements of the governmental system are

immovable,—manhood suffrage being as permanently established in France as the centralised administration. Thus the only hope of an improved state of things lies in the prospect of the nation delegating its powers to an authoritative hand instead of to parliamentary representatives. But apart from the retrograde character of such a change, which would sadden doctrinaires, no leader capable of touching popular sympathies has shown the faintest sign of existence. When he arises he may be the *bon tyran* of M. Renan's optimist dreams; but, on the other hand, there is always the fear of a shallow military adventurer being disastrously hailed to rescue the land from parliamentary anarchy. Moreover, the most definite prospect of ending the present state of things rests in the vague future which lies beyond the issues of the next European conflict; and war is so dreaded by the French, in spite of their martial temperament, that rather than contemplate its horrors they would submit to an infinitely worse regime than the present, to the defects of which the great mass of the population is absolutely indifferent.

Thus the pessimism which is now prevalent is for a paradoxical reason more widespread than that of previous periods. For the first time, in France, since the Encyclopædists began to undermine the old Monarchy, no one has a substitute to propose for the existing regime. Under every other its opponents solaced themselves with the thought that one day it could be dispensed with; and though this idea detracted from the stability of dynasties, it also checked the demoralising belief that, however bad things were, no remedy was possible. Under the Restoration, M. Guizot's letters show that he was utterly discouraged at the convergence of the Royal Government towards the principles of the Holy Alliance; but the Liberals, with the precedents of 1688 always before them, were never destitute of hope that they would one day enjoy a statutory Monarchy of the English pattern. So under the Second Empire Prévost-Paradol, long before he ever contemplated service under Napoleon III. or its tragic sequel, criticised the situation with such bitter raillery that his friends compared his talent to that of Swift. But the men of that

time who thought themselves oppressed by Imperial rule were not hopeless. Republics in France had hitherto been intervals of turmoil and anarchy between a revolution and an autocracy; so knowing nothing of Republican government as a state of existence in time of peace, they invented an ideal which they hoped would take tangible form after the Empire had passed away.

The survivors of the Opposition of that day attest that the youth of France, under the so-called tyranny of Louis Napoleon, was as happy and as sanguine as it is now cynical or dejected. M. Lavissee, the Academician, who has all his life studied the rising generation, describes the gaiety with which youthful aspirants after liberty used to hiss Sainte-Beuve at the Collège de France, and Edmund About at the Odéon, because they frequented the Court, and their joy when they received from Belgium a contraband copy of *Les Châtiments*, enclosed in a plaster bust of the Emperor, whose head they broke to the music of Victor Hugo's fierce stanzas.¹ The young men of the Empire retained their hopefulness beyond the misfortunes which produced the Republic, and it is only in its third decade that their disillusion has become complete. M. Sarcey, who has escaped the malady of the age by renouncing politics, except as a subject for reminiscence, writing of an old class-mate, Dionys Ordinaire, who was one of Gambetta's allies in the heroic days of the Second Empire, said, "Republic was for him a word of magic sound, capable of elevating the moral sense and of healing all the ills of humanity."

Short of such utopian ideals the Third Republic had every chance of bringing credit on Republican institutions and on France which adopted them. The prestige of the Third Republic would have been the great justification of the French Revolution; but the era in which its tradition has lost its glamour is that in which France has been in undisputed enjoyment of the form of government representing the principles of 1792. The most notable propagandist of pessimism in France

¹ *Jeunesse d'autrefois et jeunesse d'aujourd'hui*, par Ernest Lavissee, de l'Académie Française.

has been M. Taine, and the chief moral result of his last great work is the irretrievable damage inflicted by it on the legend of the Revolution. If, however, the Republic had been strikingly successful, if it had employed in its service the worthiest sons of France, and encouraged politicians of decorous example, if the records of its Legislature had been free from scandal, and if economical finance and useful legislation had been the product of the parliamentary system, the illustrious name of Taine would not have availed to discredit the great Revolution which the Third Republic claimed peculiarly to personify. It is, however, doubtful if in that case he would have denounced it so mercilessly. His criticisms of the old Monarchy and of the Napoleonic reconstruction show that it was not as a partisan of any regime that he attacked the Revolution. But he lived, the attentive observer of the unfolding history of his country, for twenty-two years after the foundation of the Republic; and instead of being the vindication of the Revolution, it justified in its annals the anti-revolutionary judgment of the philosopher.

At the other end of the moral and intellectual scale there is a most dissimilar pessimist influence ever at work in France. The violent press ought to have no effect on the mind of the impartial student of French institutions; but he has to take into consideration its widespread power for evil. Every day throughout France are distributed tens of thousands of cheap journals, which, expressing every shade of opinion from the doctrine of the Commune to reactionary clericalism, have one feature in common, the scurrilous aspersion of public men. Sometimes the objects of their fury are not worthy of the high position to which the accidents of an ill-contrived political system have raised them; but as a rule, the defamatory clamour has little relation with the real actions or character of the persons denounced. At all events, it is demoralising for the nation that those who read the newspapers in town and country should daily be told that all Frenchmen in authority, whether politicians, diplomatists, generals, judges, or ecclesiastics, are tainted with vice or even branded with crime. The evil is spreading, as there are provincial

journals which outdo the most abusive prints of the boulevards.

By eschewing the loud-toned organs which instruct the multitude, and perusing nothing in the press which is not signed by names of high authority, the newspaper reader in France does not escape pessimistic influence. One of the ablest of French political writers is M. Jules Roche, a former minister of the Republic. Summing up a series of elaborate studies on the parliamentary system after twenty years of undiluted Republican rule, he declares, "We are the worst governed country in the world; or I will say, so as to hurt no one's feelings, one of the very worst." This member of Parliament may have personal reasons for not admiring the work of his colleagues. But M. Jules Lemaître is not a disillusionised politician. He has attained the highest honour which can crown a Frenchman's career, and an early election to the Academy ought to induce a cheerful view of the national life, at all events for a few years. Yet he asserts that France is in full decadence, and is going to its doom with its eyes open, for "never was a wretched nation more conscious of the ills which afflict it." He also says that "for twenty-seven years it has been a doubtful pleasure to be a Frenchman;" so, as he was a boy at the time of the war, he has never known since he came to man's estate the pride of nationality. Both these writers diffuse their pessimism in a widely-read journal,¹ attached to no party, before delivering it to the limited public which buys volumes of essays; and both of them, I venture to say, formulate their discontent in exaggerated terms, which represent the prevalent malady rather than an accurate statement of facts.

Although in this work I have freely criticised certain features in the government of France, far from thinking with the Republican politician that his country is "the worst governed in the world," I should be perplexed to mention three nations which on the whole are better governed than France. Nothing which strikes the eye of the itinerant stranger suggests that the

¹ *Figaro*, April 13, May 22, June 11, 1897

country is ill-governed ; and he often takes home an idea, which we in England have put into aphoristic form, that things are managed better in France than elsewhere. Moreover, on the condition of never looking at a newspaper or mentioning a political subject, one might reside for years in the land without knowing that any one thought it was badly governed. No doubt in the daily routine of life incidents grievous to citizens arise, similar to those which provoke the complaints of Englishmen offended by the caprices of income-tax assessors or the whims of postal authorities. But petty dolours such as these do not depress the spirit of a nation, and we must take care to discern what the ex-minister means by ill-government. His strictures refer to the parliamentary system, which has been regulated exclusively by his political friends for twenty years ; while the well-organised daily life of the nation, which is but little affected, is a striking sign of the excellence of Napoleon's administrative structure.

There can be no doubt about the pessimistic effect of a system of government which animates not only violent malcontents, but also moderate and authoritative writers to disseminate the depressing epidemic. For all that, the complaints of M. Lemaître, like those of the ex-minister, are much too sweeping. No Frenchman ought to despair when he contemplates the orderliness, the diligence, and the thrift of the majority of the nation. The solid qualities of the people, first tested by the payment to the Germans of the colossal war indemnity, have reorganised the army and produced the wealth without which an alliance with another military power in need of loans would have been vainly sought by the politicians. Their own most tangible production has been unsound finance, with the consequent increase of the burden of taxation ; and the indifference of a provident democracy to the prodigal proceedings of its chosen representatives is a sign of the unsuitability of the regime under which it lives and works, rather than of the decadence of the nation. The curious phenomenon has been fully dealt with in these pages, and since they were written it has inspired another

member of the French Academy with some of his most incisive observations on the ways of his countrymen. In one of his masterly studies of provincial life, M. Anatole France, describing how the laborious population of a department received the news of the arrest of one of its members of Parliament with the same impassibility as it would have heard of his nomination to an embassy, remarks: "Public opinion, which was a reality under the Monarchy and the Empire, has no existence in our time, and the people once ardent and generous are now incapable either of love or of hatred, of admiration or of contempt."¹

None of the foregoing appreciations, it is to be noted, were uttered in the days of international isolation. They were all made after the visit of the Tsar to Paris, when a monarch, for the first time since France ceased to have one of her own, entered the capital in state,—thus, it was said, conferring lustre on the Republic, and restoring with its European prestige the ancient blitheness of the nation. I saw the Russian sovereigns pass through the streets from the house where Talleyrand lodged another Tsar in 1814. It was a suggestive spectacle to watch the elected chief of the parliamentary Republic pointing out the historical site to his august guests, the great-great-grandchildren of Alexander I. and of George III.; for it was within these walls that the autocrat of Russia, being master of the situation, decreed that France should have a constitution on the model of that presided over by his ally the King of England,² who was not able to take an active part in the transactions which followed the fall of Napoleon. Representative government might have been tried in France without the intervention of the enlightened despot who had a taste for political experiments; but as it was actually first set up by the instrumentality of a Russian Emperor, it would be just if the friendship of his descendant could lead to a remedy for some of the ills which its later developments have brought on the French nation.

¹ *Sur le Banc du Mail*, par Anatole France, de l'Académie Française (afterwards reprinted in the volume entitled *Le Mannequin d'Osier*).

² The circumstances are related on p 476

That the relations of France with Russia have not brightened the view of some of the most thoughtful critics is not a bad sign ; for, while in my opinion there is no ground for their extreme pessimism, it is more salutary for the country that its sober thinkers should have escaped the strange doctrine, propagated by politicians, that the friendship of Russia has given France a higher rank among nations. A more humiliating theme was never uttered in the name of patriotism. France has never ceased to be a great nation, by virtue of the genius of its people, irrespective of international vicissitude. If, however, that people ever adopt the demoralising idea that their national prestige depends on alien protection, it will take a long step down from its high eminence. But no alliance, however gratifying to proper patriotic pride, and no military success ensuing from it, not even though it restore Alsace and Lorraine to France, will bring lasting satisfaction unless a form of government be established capable of working well with the permanent institutions of the country. These are the Centralised Administration and Manhood Suffrage ; and even though the master whom France is always looking for arrive, he will not enjoy a long reign unless he be apt to combine those elements.

Amateurs of the diversified French coinage of this century are familiar with a series of gold pieces, of great beauty, struck when it was young, the oldest bearing the revolutionary date An XII., and the most modern that of four years later, 1808. They are still in circulation. Their unworn outlines tell of ninety years' hoarding, and betoken the national virtue of thrift, to which France largely owes its stability, while several generations of limners of the Mint have invented new effigies to distinguish passing dynasties. On these coins the image and superscription are worthy of note, not merely for their fresh preservation of Cæsar's finely-cut profile, but because on their face is engraved "Napoléon Empereur," and on the reverse "République Française." Even before the term Empire was made official the Republic was overlaid with Imperial trappings, and we all know whither the pride of empire which they symbolised took the great

reconstructor of France. Nevertheless the legend on these coins, with all its inconsistency, seems to indicate the form of government which France needs. Frenchmen who look with admiring eyes to the British Monarchy, the subjects of which enjoy more liberty than do the citizens of their Republic, sometimes define our regime as an ideal Republican government with a sovereign at its head. The description is not inapt; but France, instead of trying to imitate our institutions, unsuited to the genius or tradition of her race, should organise her own under an appropriate headship. Thus an Emperor, as the chief of a Republic, far from being an anomaly, might under favouring circumstances solve the unravelled problem of the century.

The word Emperor has no longer the unpopular sound in French ears of the years succeeding Sedan, when for a season the memory of the first Napoleon was involved in the second downfall of his dynasty. No one now regards Louis Napoleon as a Tiberius or a Nero. He is recognised as a well-meaning and ambiguous dreamer, who drifted into destruction carrying with him the nation which he had previously brought to great prosperity. One pernicious heritage left by him has abundantly developed under the Republic. After he had let Prussia clear the way at Sadowa for the conquest of France, and while he was devising the empirical remedy of a Liberal Empire for the dangers thus made inevitable, his Court became the centre of influence to turn Paris into a cosmopolitan city of boisterous luxury, which, encouraged within the palace, demoralised even the army of France. The latter phase of the evil no longer exists. Whatever is open to criticism now in the nation, the army, in spite of isolated scandals, is on the whole free from the ills which deface political or fashionable society. But otherwise the social mischief thus sown in the capital has so spread, that critics of the Empire are fain to confess that even its frivolous Court had restraining qualities which would be salutary for Parisian license under the Republic.

Never had a society such an opportunity for doing service to their country as had the higher circles of Paris after the war.

Even after the politicians of their preference had thrown away their chance of governing the country, when the Republic was founded, a self-respecting upper class, well organised and vigilant, might have been a serious factor in French politics. If the Republic had been governed by men of genius or integrity no force of aristocratic pretension could have impeded its popular career. But the ephemeral ministries of the Republic have not been so composed; and it might have had its days shortened if Paris had contained a society similar to that frequented by the Liberal Opposition under the Restoration, when the salon of the Duchesse de Broglie had perhaps more influence on the destinies of France than the writings of her mother, Madame de Staël. If the circumstances are not analogous, the bearers of names once famous at Court or on battle-field, and once associated with wit and intellect, together with other possessors of wealth, might at all events have so shaped the corporate existence of the leisured class of a great capital as to be an element in the political destiny of France, and to gain the respect of Europe.

Unhappily, the well-born and the wealthy class in Paris has since the war pursued a line of conduct which has grieved all who love France or who recognised the social danger of unseemly example in high places. In the course of this work I have been led to mention some of the features of that curious society; but in doing so I have followed the rule, which has guided me in dealing with every phase of French life, of never making a harsh criticism unless my own impression were corroborated by the published opinion of a respected and impartial French authority. For example, in treating of this subject I have not ventured to express myself as strongly as has M. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu in the following passage, which, as it contains some significant English terms, would lose its force in translation: "*Les hautes classes sont inconsciemment les grands fauteurs du socialisme. Leur vie est une prédication contre la société. La frivolité impertinente de la jeunesse de nos salons, l'oisiveté ridiculement affairée de nos sportsmen et de nos clubmen, l'étalage outrageant de la débauche élégante, quelles leçons pour le peuple de la*

rue!"¹ This is the calm judgment of a distinguished member of the wealthy class, who has no love for the parliamentary Republic, and whose philosophic writings, which have given him a high place in European letters, are free from all exaggeration.

M. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu deprecates the ways of Parisian society because of its dangerous example; but equally eminent Frenchmen, less interested in the social question, deplore the saddening spectacle on other grounds, and it is one of the causes of the pessimism of writers like the gifted Academicians whom I have quoted. It is indeed mortifying to a patriotic Frenchman, who by his talent maintains the renown of his nation, to see his beloved Paris, with all its past tradition and present capacity, assuming the aspect of a cosmopolitan city of pleasure; to watch it becoming, in the eyes of strangers, a place like Nice or such like resort of idlers, where the foreign element leads the fashion, and where the affairs of the country interest no one. For the most conspicuous Parisians, whose exploits are most widely advertised, proclaim that, apart from their lighter relaxations, their gravest ambition is to vie with exotic foreigners in diversions imported from England. Thus, accomplished Frenchmen, who would have shone in salons, lament that Paris is becoming an international casino,—a sad fate for the brilliant city, in which, save in the darkest hours of the Revolution, for over two hundred years, from the time of the Hôtel de Rambouillet to the death of M. Thiers, the intelligent commerce of refined men and women had a distinct influence on the history of France and on its place in the world.

It must not be thought that all French people of high social rank are given up to frivolity. Remote country châteaux are often the scenes of blameless and simple lives, while in Parisian society there are many excellent women who, not shunning worldly pastime, are devoted to good works. Moreover, even among the men there are a few fine patterns of conduct. M. de Mun is an instance of a well-born Frenchman of attractive social

¹ *La papauté, le socialisme et la démocratie*, par Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, membre de l'Institut.

as well as mental gifts, who, instead of squandering them on the idle plea that the Republic gives no scope to a man of good family, has so cultivated all his powers that they have borne him to a seat in the French Academy. Another member of that company, whose origin exalted him above his countrymen, though it likewise brought exile and disability upon him, was a splendid example to the gentlemen of France. The Duc d'Aumale had no sympathy with the lives of that monarchical class which has hopelessly prejudiced the dynastic fortunes of his kinsmen. Yet neither the folly of Royalists, nor the outrage and injury inflicted on him by Republican rulers, diverted him from his nobly appointed mission to illustrate to his countrymen the duties devolving, even under unfavourable circumstances, on the possession of a great name and of great wealth.

One unfortunate result of the practices of "*la haute société Parisienne*" is to extend the pessimism, which we have been considering, to certain foreign observers, who have nothing in common with pleasure-seeking immigrants from the East and the West, but who, at the same time, have no opportunity of seeing the more admirable phases of the national life. The most pessimistic appreciations of France and its people which I ever heard from lips not French were those of a distinguished Ambassador to the Republic—a man of the world of cosmopolitan tastes, and blessed with a happy disposition for looking at the bright side of existence. The reason was that his ideas of France were taken from the society of aristocratic pretension, from the politicians of democratic profession, and from the press. His experiences in many lands had taught him that an intelligent familiarity with those three elements in a nation usually afford some clue to its characteristics, its ethical standard, and its possible destiny. To draw conclusions from such objects of study in France seems the more reasonable because of their mutual dissidence—fashion and politics being completely antagonistic to one another, while in the newspapers the exponents of both are often treated with contumely. But general principles cannot be followed in appraising the French; and the elements which preserve them from the

fate predicted by the experienced diplomatic censor are not palpably manifest to the view of even the most favoured official visitors to France.

Apart from the mass of the people, with their excellent qualities of stability and diligence, there are three great but dissimilar bodies in the nation, the virtues of which counter-balance the ill done by the conspicuous classes whose words and deeds fill the newspapers. These are the Army, the University, and the Clergy. The virtues fostered by them, which are not practised by the political and fashionable classes, nor inculcated by the popular press, are a high sense of duty and a respect for authority, combined with unobtrusive hard work and vigorous abnegation. The entire manhood of the nation passes through the ranks of the army; and grave as is the economical aspect of compulsory service which takes from their training at a critical period the apprentices in every art, craft, and science, since Europe has to be a military camp, the army of France may be regarded as a national institution of beneficial influence. The officers usually set an example of devotion to their duties, avoiding luxurious pretension even in the rare cases where they are rich. A close study of garrison life, at a period when criticisms of the high commanders have not been rare, has helped me to understand the general affection in which the French soldier is held whatever his grade. The respect for the uniform, no doubt, is greatly due to the martial instinct of which few Frenchmen are destitute; but for the practical enjoyment of that sentiment every French family pays in kind. Moreover, as the peasant and the tradesman have a fervid horror of war, the universal popularity of the army speaks well for the general effect of military discipline on the nation.

The University is the technical term for the great teaching corporation engaged in the secondary and superior education of the country under the Ministry of Public Instruction. The educational system has become the object of severe criticism in France, when every Frenchman wishes to incite his neighbour or his neighbour's son to go to the colonies, as it is deemed to dis-

courage initiative, and to turn out youths who are fit for nothing but a life of routine. Pending the controversy on the need of educational reform, which I hope before long to deal with, the teachers engaged in secondary and superior education, who are classed together in France as Professors, form a body which is an admirable force within the nation. The devoted men who compose it have not the unattractive social habits of the professorial class in some continental countries, being often as refined as they are learned. Yet unlike our prosperous educators they are slenderly paid, and there are no pecuniary prizes whatever in their calling for even those who attain its highest posts. Their sole stimulant is thus the sense of duty which guides them in their modest but momentous functions ; and they pursue them conscientiously, rarely seeking for commendation outside their academic circle.

The third beneficial category in the nation is the Clergy. The old conflict between the Church and the University, which raged throughout the Monarchy of July and the Second Empire, reached its bitterest pitch when a professor, M. Paul Bert, was chosen as the ruthless anti-clerical instrument of the Republic. But while the discord between free inquiry and dogmatic belief remains irreconcilable, circumstances have led the priesthood and the professoriate to regard one another less pugnaciously. In one of the life-like provincial sketches by an accomplished Academician¹ already quoted, a learned member of the Faculty of Letters in a country town and the Principal of the Diocesan Seminary cultivate a curious mutual friendship, in the course of which, while renewing their eternal controversies, they find that, seeing things from a higher plane than their fellow-citizens of the Republic, they have a bond of sympathy. Rare though such intimacies may be in France, the apologue shows how the clergy may be coupled with their old antagonists, the lay professors of higher education, as a salutary national influence under the Third Republic, to counteract the ill-example and debased ideal of those whose lives ought to be a pattern of conduct. The author of the *Vie de Jésus*, who had none of the injustice of an apostate, said of

¹ *L'Orme du Mail*, par Anatole France.

the order which he had quitted, "I have never known any but good priests;"¹ and seven years of constant association with French ecclesiastics of every rank have impressed the full value of this testimony upon me, who also regard the Catholic Church objectively, though not from the point of view of M. Renan. My studies on the Church in France, in the work which will follow this one, will fully deal with the condition and character of the clergy. All that need be said of them here is, that by their lives and example they show how a celibate sacerdotal caste may be an advantage in a modern State. One of the objections to the celibacy of a priesthood is that it withdraws from the nation a generative force; but at the present hour, when the frugal caution of the peasantry is depopulating France, the regions where a normal birth-rate is maintained are those where the teaching of the Church is most heeded. The clergy represent all the best features of the French peasantry who form the robust backbone of the nation; for it is to be noted that they are recruited exclusively from that class and from the minor bourgeoisie. The descendants of the nobility which monopolised the rich benefices of the old regime, who, in the intervals of their modern diversions, profess loud devotion to the Church, successfully discourage their sons from entering the orders of the secular clergy, now that it is ill-paid, laborious, and virtuous. The parish priests of France, than whom there is not a more exemplary body of men in any land, illustrate the better qualities, refined by discipline, of those great categories of the people which constitute the real force of the nation.

In these pages we shall not see much of the more excellent elements in the community, nor of the great mass of the people of France whose silent, sober energy makes up for the errors of its conspicuous classes. It is particularly with the politicians we shall have to do. While writing this work amid the calm which is the general characteristic of life in France, I have often recalled the words of one of those old Republicans whose eloquence and moderation raised the level of debate in the National Assembly,

¹ *Souvenirs d'Enfance*, "Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet."

and helped to found the Third Republic which their respectable school was not permitted to govern. M. Laboulaye said: "We present the spectacle of a tranquil people with agitated legislators."¹ This was the experience of a veteran, who had seen men of the Revolution, and who had himself witnessed most of the political vicissitudes of the century, even before the creation of the Parliamentary Constitution of 1875, which was to enhance the truth of his aphorism.

The place of which I was the tenant in the Brie was an old ecclesiastical fief; so by a usage which suggests that France was not entirely renovated at the Revolution, we had, when Holy Cross Day came round, to give up to the village fête our rights over a green at the gates of the château. Thus my neighbour for several weeks each year was a philosopher who was the owner of a set of swings for the use of infants. He was a Parisian glove-maker, and as his trade was slack in the summer, he took his vacation in making the rounds of the rural fairs of the Île de France. Born under Louis Philippe he had seen a few revolutions and regimes, but had never taken any part in politics, though he had lived all his life on the turbulent northern heights of Paris, where the insurrection of the Commune broke out in 1871. He had never been Orleanist, Imperialist, or Republican, so he assured me; and the only indirect way in which he had ever been connected with any political movement was after the Commune, when, as a fireman, he helped to quench the flames of the buildings set alight by the politicians. The experience of this sage is that of the great bulk of the inhabitants of France. They toil at their calling so long as work is to be done; they take their holidays happily, yet thriftily; and their sole participation in the politics of the nation is that their energy supplies the remedy for the damage done to France by political incendiaries of various denominations.

In a treatise dealing with questions of government the existence of worthy citizens like this journeyman of Montmartre can only incidentally be noticed. But in studying the political

¹ Assemblée Nationale: Séance du 28 Janvier 1875.

institutions of France it must always be remembered that, however unsatisfactory a spectacle the conduct of public affairs may present, the land contains several millions of worthy people of various classes engaged in the tillage of the soil, in crafts of skill, and in commerce, as well as in intellectual pursuits, who are working, most of them unconsciously, for the benefit of the community. Moreover, such lives abound not merely in the silence of the fields and vineyards, or amid the placid murmur of country towns; for Paris, the nursery of revolution, the playground of frivolity, the theatre of political adventure, is also a brilliant centre of intellect and one of the great workshops of the world.

V

The study of problems and systems of government is, even when inconclusive or perplexing, so interesting to mankind, that a work which treats of those of a nation whose political experiments have convulsed the world need not profess to have any other object beyond their historical and philosophical consideration. This would seem to be obvious did not certain writers on the institutions of lands not their own conceive themselves, as the result of their brief voyages of discovery, accredited with an international mission. "If," say in substance these modest optimists, "in revealing the inhabitants of one great country to another we have helped to clear away misunderstandings which result from ignorance, and if we have thus lessened the danger of hostilities between two enlightened peoples, we shall be sufficiently rewarded." The ingenuous idea of two nations learning to love one another out of a manual would not need attention were it nurtured only by sanguine authors; but for the purpose of cultivating a similar theory societies have actually been formed. One of them tells the public that a more intimate knowledge of each other's language, social customs, and political institutions would lessen the danger of conflict between England and France. If there were any fear of this amiable delusion becoming current it might be dangerous, as it belongs to the

same category as that cherished by the estimable Quakers who surprised Nicholas I. with a visit on the eve of the Crimean War. It may, however, be useful to point out that there is no justification in history for the propagation of this idea ; and that there is no modern instance of a war between two countries being delayed for a day because their inhabitants were familiar with each other's way of life or of government.

On the contrary, since the Crimean expedition, which prophets said was to be the last "*guerre de chancellerie*,"—the last conflict in which civilised peoples were to be engaged without mutual animosity, simply at the bidding of their rulers,—most of the wars in which Christian nations have contended have been between combatants who had an intimate acquaintance with one another's language, institutions, and social customs. The most deadly and prolonged conflict of the second half of the century was that between the Northern and Southern States of America, the inhabitants of which were mutually possessed of all the knowledge which in the future is to make wars cease. If, however, civil war may not be reckoned, while it was going on, Prussia, aided by Austria, attacked Denmark for the very reason that part of the Danish population was so familiar with German institutions that it was deemed fit to make it enter the German Confederacy. Two years later, the victors in that fray having quarrelled over the spoil, the peoples of North and South Germany, whose common language was the basis of their intimacy with the social and public conditions of one another's states, fell to blows, and ended their struggle on the field of Sadowa, the most decisive battle of the century since Waterloo.

If we regard the relations of powers which have not broken the peace we observe similar phenomena. Since the month of June 1815, the period of the century in which England and France came most perilously near an appeal to arms was not when the colonels of the Second Empire—their martial appetites whetted by the Italian campaign—threatened us with invasion, nor when Republican love for Russian autocracy has induced attacks of Anglophobia. It was under the Monarchy modelled

on the English pattern, when the foreign affairs of France were directed by the most enthusiastic and well-informed admirer of English institutions the world ever saw. M. Guizot, the idolater of the British Constitution, the profound expositor of our national history, the intimate correspondent of British statesmen, was during his powerful ministry again and again on the verge of a rupture of diplomatic intercourse with Great Britain. His friendship with Lord Aberdeen may possibly have helped to ward off war in connection with the Pritchard Affair in 1844. But when Lord Palmerston came to the Foreign Office, it was M. Guizot, with his policy in the Spanish Marriages, who so embittered our mutual relations that Europe witnessed the unseemly spectacle of the British Ambassador in Paris publicly bandying insults with the Minister of France; while it was M. Thiers, with no knowledge of our people and their institutions, excepting such as was included in his legendary omniscience, who aimed at conciliating England.

At the end of the nineteenth century the same phenomenon is apparent; and on the face of the globe there is not a single instance of two nations which have a cordial feeling for one another due to their intimate acquaintance. The citizens of the United States are more conversant with our language, institutions, and social life than any other foreign people. Yet we must fain recognise that their collective love for us has been less evident than that of the Italians, whose knowledge of us is shadowy and traditional. Moreover, the real strength of the basis of the Franco-Russian alliance is the complete ignorance which the two contracting nations have of one another, excepting the fraction of the Russian upper class which cultivates the lighter products of the French language.

While forced to recognise this deplorable truth, I consider that a war between England and France would be the greatest misfortune which could afflict the human race, and that scarcely any sacrifice, consistent with national honour, would be too great to effect the union of our two nations in the field, if we are fated to take part in the next European conflict. We have arrived at

a stage in the history of the two countries which differs from any other which England and France have reached since they became nations. For the first time since the Norman Conquest three generations have gone by without the armies of England and of France meeting in battle array. The last of the veterans of Toulouse and of Waterloo have passed away ; and it seems certain that, for the first time since the invention of gunpowder, there is no man living who has fired a shot in warfare between the French and English nations.

There were bowmen of Poitiers who lived to hear of their sons wielding the firelock at Agincourt, when already Joan of Arc was listening at Domrémy to legends of English aggression. After she had fulfilled her destiny in withstanding the power of England, rarely a decade passed without renewal of Anglo-French hostilities, till the comparative peace maintained by the first Tudor monarchs. Yet even in that amicable period there were three English invasions of France in half a century. Then followed the loss of Calais, Elizabeth's armed interventions on behalf of the Huguenots, and the expedition to La Rochelle, all within seventy years. When England ceased to be ruled by a king, and France was governed by an Italian Cardinal, Cromwell and Mazarin agreed to keep the peace for a short season ; but all the love of Charles II. for Louis XIV. could not prevent their two nations coming to blows, and in 1666 we were actually at war with France. The military inaction forced on the English by the last of the Stuart line ceased, after the flight of James II., with the French invasion of Ireland, followed forthwith by the sea-fight of La Hogue. Thence Blenheim was only a dozen years distant, and there were young soldiers of Marlborough and of Villars at Malplaquet who fought as veterans at Fontenoy. Only seventy years then remained to Waterloo, a blood-stained period as crowded with French and British encounters as that of the Hundred Years' War with which this recapitulation began.

During all the ages that the English tongue has existed, and during the long evolution of the language of France, from the *Langue d'Oïl*, in which Froissart told the tale of Crécy, to the

modern French in which Victor Hugo described the struggle at Mont Saint Jean, the generation of writers now grown gray is the first which has had no opportunity to supply contemporary chroniclers of French and English mutual slaughter. In the lapse of all those centuries there was never an epoch till the present in which old campaigners of both nations could not show their scars, made by French and English steel, to inspire their sons to renew the perennial feud. For the first time the manhood of the two peoples have never seen mourning garb worn by their women as a sign that there were precious lives to be avenged in the next encounter.

The close of a century of the common era has come to be regarded as an important stage in the history of the human race, although it is such an artificial division of time that many people are uncertain in which year it ends and when its successor begins. Whether we quit the nineteenth century on the last day of 1899, or begin the twentieth only with 1901, it is devoutly to be hoped that for the relations of England and France the epoch may have no other importance than that of a date to mark the completion of an unexampled span of peace which gives promise of attaining unbroken its hundredth anniversary. But to aid that happy consummation is not within the power of any writer, however sincere his pacific ardour; for the issues which divide or unite nations are regulated by unexpected contingencies which defy even the calculations of statesmen and divert the patriotic passions of peoples. The only advantage in this respect possessed by an assiduous student of two great countries is that his intimate knowledge of their inhabitants puts him in the position of a favoured spectator of their national life and of their international relations. So, calling to mind that the deity who protected the traffic of the book-stalls had his shrine hard by the gates which, opening or shut, indicated the imminence of war or the establishment of peace, he may say to his book on sending it forth:—

Vertumnum Janumque, liber, spectare videris.¹

¹ Horace, *Ep.* i, 20, 1.

BOOK I

THE REVOLUTION AND MODERN FRANCE

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE REVOLUTION

I

AT the end of the nineteenth century there are two families of the human species of which the institutions and experiments, political and social, are of surpassing interest to students, statesmen, and philosophers. That the Anglo-Saxon race, in its marvellous expansion, should command their attention is not surprising, seeing how it has carried all over the globe the English language,—imposing it, as well as versions of the mother constitution, on new communities of diverse origin, the largest and most mixed of which is not subject to the sceptre of England. But besides the societies peopling the British Empire and the American Commonwealth, there is a nation in the Old World which, though it has not expanded either in Europe or beyond the seas, is equally attractive to study. The frontiers of France are not wider than they were when the United States were British dependencies. Its population has scarcely increased since our Australian Colonies were constituted. Its emigrants who go forth to distant lands with fixed intent to remain and to stock them with a French-speaking population are fewer than in the reign of Louis XV. Yet the people inhabiting this tract of the Continent, their social economy, their ideas on government, and the development of their institutions, are as full of living and philosophical interest as those of any community on the face of the earth.

If this could be said of other nations of modern Europe the importance of France as a subject of social and political study would not be remarkable, for its high place is unchallenged among the great powers. But the interest inspired by each of the others is limited or special. Austro-Hungary is a collection of peoples heterogeneous in language and race. United Italy lives on the renown of the ages when Italy was a geographical expression. Russia is a quarter of the globe of which the European fringe administers a score of races, mostly Asiatic, under the autocracy of an imported dynasty.

There is, however, one nation of Europe which can be mentioned side by side with England and France; yet Germany, which stands with them conspicuous in the front rank of civilisation, does not attract the attention of the outside world as do France, the United Kingdom, and Greater Britain. This anomaly is so curious that it deserves a short consideration. The Germans, having beaten the French on the battle-field, proceeded to new victories in the struggle for commercial priority, and having surpassed their neighbours in this contest, they are threatening the industrial supremacy of Great Britain. Scientific and systematic, they pursue the practical arts of peace with the same serious spirit with which they perfected the art of war. Nor is their energy entirely material in its aims. Learning and research are still cultivated for their own sake in Germany, and critical philosophy still has its home there. Again, the populations of both hemispheres are affected by the developments of the social problem in the German Empire, which is the chief centre of Socialistic agitation in the world; while at the other end of the political scale there is a monarch whose unflagging youth has kept the eyes of all mankind fixed on his Imperial domain. But the Emperor is not the only German sovereign who commands attention. There is scarcely a throne in Christendom which is not filled by one of his race. In most of the reigning families of Europe, like those of England and of Russia, the strain is wholly Germanised. In others, like the House of Savoy, it is less so; but the general result is that allegiance to

the institution of royalty in all civilised countries involves loyalty to a personage of German descent. Even in the line of Bernadotte, the last living and effective relic of the Napoleonic legend, since the son of the Gascon lawyer made a queen of the daughter of Ciary the merchant of Marseilles, German intermarriages have un-Gallicised the Swedish dynasty. Moreover, if France had to take as ruler either of the pretenders who advance hereditary claims, the choice would have to be made between an Orleans whose father was half a German, and who himself has married a Teutonic princess, and a Bonaparte who has no French blood in his veins, but who had two German grandmothers.¹

Thus the prominence of the Germans in arms and commerce, in learning and sociology, to say nothing of their monopoly of the crowns of Europe, would suggest that the institutions of their fatherland, and the life and customs of its inhabitants, have a claim on the interest of other civilised peoples as great as that inspired by the political and social features of France. This is not the place to demonstrate that it is not so, or to discover the reasons of the anomaly; but we may glance at one superficial sign of the truth of the proposition. The English are a Teutonic race, and the relations of England and Germany are intimate and manifold; but in the more cultivated circles of London it is probable that for every twenty persons who, questioned abruptly, could give the names of half a dozen French writers of the present decade, not one could mention three contemporary German authors. If one so well informed were encountered, he would be either an abstruse specialist, or a youth filled for a competitive examination with knowledge encyclopædic and momentary. The reasons, historical and actual, why members of other civilised communities take so little spontaneous interest in the life of the

¹ The son of Bernadotte, who succeeded his father on the throne of Sweden as Oscar I., married the daughter of Eugène Beauharnais by a princess of Bavaria. His son, the present king, married a princess of Nassau, and the Prince Royal is married to a princess of Baden. The mother of the Comte de Paris was a princess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and the wife of the Duc d'Orléans is a Hapsburg. The two grandmothers of Prince Victor Bonaparte were a princess of Wurtemberg, wife of Jerome, sometime king of Westphalia, and a Hapsburg, wife of Victor Emmanuel, whose mother likewise was a Hapsburg.

people of Germany cannot be enumerated here. The chief, perhaps, is that the Germans are burdened with a language difficult to master, which they themselves willingly relinquish for tongues more practical. By this faculty of repudiating what is indigenous the Germans seem to warn the world that nothing but their exports are worthy of attention. The flood of German immigrants who renounce their nationality to settle permanently in English-speaking lands, under Anglo-Saxon institutions, eschewing their own colonies, is an eloquent testimony of the failure of Germany to inspire a durable interest even in native hearts.

It is not my intention to essay any comparison between the French and the German character. Here we have only to do with France, and there is no need to demonstrate that the French nation has that quality in which the Germans are lacking. All other civilised peoples look to France and to the human movement within its borders. Its relative importance in the world may be less than formerly; yet, with improved means of communication, which have developed its rivals, France has become an object of interest to a greater number of denizens of other lands than at any time since it became a nation. No doubt that interest is for the most part superficial. Still it indicates superiority in a race that strangers all over the globe should study, not as a passing fashion, but with steady eagerness, descriptions of its life and manners as portrayed in romances and comedies. It is true that most of these works of fancy give an erroneous impression of French domestic ethics. True, also, is it that in spite of the vast numbers of aliens who sojourn or travel in France, attracted by its amenity, few foreigners have any acquaintance with the real elements of the French nation. Nevertheless it commands attention, not only in its lighter aspects of existence, but as a people which, in making experiments in the art of government, has caused more commotion and greater sacrifice of life and treasure than all other modern communities of the human race put together in essaying similar problems. It is in its quality as the land of the Revolution that we have now to consider the position of France.

II

During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century the tradition of the great Revolution was so sacred in France that Frenchmen, in spite of the national pride which they cherish, seemed willing to ascribe their high position as a people in the ranks of humanity less to the prodigious genius of their race than to the political convulsion amid which the ancient Monarchy and its institutions disappeared. The various regimes which subsequently succeeded one another were severally defended as phases of it. Thus Napoleon was the soldier of the Revolution, and the Empire its apotheosis. The Restoration with its Charter was the constitutional Monarchy to have been set up by the National Assembly but for the king's flight to Varennes and the European coalition. It fell into anti-revolutionary hands, so the Monarchy of July was put in its place under the son of Philippe Égalité, who was presented to the people by La Fayette, the inventor in 1789 of the tricolour,¹ now unfurled again. The Republic of 1848, of which Lamartine was the transitory hero, owed its unstable foundation to his eulogy of the Convention. The Second Empire, which suppressed it, was advertised as the assertion of the principle of the Revolution; and when the last Constitution of the century had to be devised the delegates of the nation, who hesitated about its form, agreed with overwhelming voice in their adhesion to the doctrine of 1789.

To the great book of the Revolution the friends and foes of each form of government set up in France turned, just as in our country rival religious sects cited the authority of Holy Scripture :—

Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque,
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.

In English history there has been no one era comparable to the French Revolution. There have been epochs of the highest

¹ La Fayette was not persistently loyal to the tricolour. In March 1815, on the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba, he came up from La Grange to offer his services to Louis XVIII., and appeared at the Tuileries with the white cockade in his hat.—*Mémoires de La Fayette*, v. 5.

importance, such as the Reformation, the Elizabethan Age, the Great Rebellion, and the Revolution of 1688; but there is no one cardinal period to which men have referred everything in the modern State. The most remarkable feature of the French Revolution was perhaps the immediate impression which it gave of its historical importance. As a rule the impressional reaction after a political convulsion is swift. A man felled to the ground by a fragment of his house, blown off by a passing gust, may suffer the same sensation as the victim of a tornado which has devastated a continent; but he soon recovers and recognises, in spite of his personal emotion, that the disturbance was only local. This, however, was not the experience of the witnesses of the Revolution and of at least two generations of their progeny. M. Taine himself, whose appreciations we shall have to take account of, having grown up among survivors of the period, could say that he had been able to write on it as though his theme had been the Revolutions of Florence or of Athens;¹ and this was not entirely due to his own peculiar objectivity. The French Revolution had raised itself before the eyes even of those who had involuntarily grown up in it as a barrier between modern times and the past. M. de Barante, the ambassador of Louis Philippe, who all his life recorded his impressions, noted that when, an observant youth, he entered the École Polytechnique under the Directory, only nine years after the fall of the Bastille, people spoke of the Ancient Regime as of something belonging to antiquity or to a distant land.²

We who now stand on the verge of the twentieth century look back on the epoch preceding the French Revolution as belonging to the distant past. Yet even our generation is not remote from it. A Parisian, whose life was cut short before its natural term in the Presidency of M. Faure, had as witnesses to her marriage three contemporaries of Robespierre and Danton, born when the mother of the Bonapartes was a little child.³ Four years older

¹ *La Révolution*, vol. i. Préface.

² *Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. i.

³ The Baronne de Valley, murdered in 1896, was married at St. Germain l'Auxerrois in the early days of the Monarchy of July, and her marriage certificate,

than Charlotte Corday was the father of the Duc de La Trémoille, who was born in the reign of Queen Victoria. An old priest in the Sarthe still says his mass in the parish church, of which the previous curé was instituted in 1785,¹ when the clergy held a fifth of the soil of France, and their prelates were semi-sovereign princes. The span of life of some of our own countrymen makes us realise more vividly how near we are to that great era. Mr. Gladstone in his last Ministry had colleagues between whose age and his there was a longer space of years than between the date of his birth and that of St. Just the Conventional, whom Thermidor brought to the scaffold; and the aged statesman left in the House of Commons an older veteran, who was learning to read when the Revolutionary Calendar was still used in France.²

We shall presently consider the causes which induced the survivors of the Revolution to look back upon it as a most imposing epoch, raising to heroic rank those whom it had produced. They in turn handed on the tradition to their sons, who inherited their reflected lustre. Hence the belief of the old men whom this generation has seen, such as M. Jules Simon, that the French Revolution was the greatest event, ancient or modern, in the history of the world. The venerable philosopher who, though a Republican, in the days when the creed was a disability, was treated as a Reactionary under the Third Republic, had opposed the Second Empire as the contradiction of his view of the Revolution. Yet there were supporters of the Imperial regime who were eulogists of the Revolution as eloquent as the Republicans of 1848. There was Sainte-Beuve, born ten years nearer to it than Jules Simon, whose devotion to the Second

which established her identity, showed that her witnesses were contemporaries of Danton and Robespierre, who were both born in 1759. Letitia Ramolino, the mother of Napoleon, was born in 1750, and Charlotte Corday in 1768.

¹ The Abbé Paris, who became curé of Vallon-sur-Gès, diocese of Le Mans, in 1842 as the immediate successor of the Abbé François Pineau, who was instituted in 1785.

² Mr. Gladstone was born in 1809, forty years after St. Just, who was the same age as Napoleon. Some authorities make St. Just two years older, but books and prints published at the time of the Revolution give the date of 1769. Mr. Villiers was born in 1802, and was in his fourth year when the Revolutionary Calendar was abolished.

Empire did not prevent his writing: "If you would admire the French Revolution, study it. It came, like the Law from Sinai, amid thunder and lightning. Fox spoke up for it, for the foreigner loved it as much as we did; Goethe blessed it; Schiller defended it; Byron celebrated it—all when it was only fifteen years old. In a hundred years it will be acclaimed as far as the land of the Samoyedes."¹

That remote region is on the European frontier of Siberia; and Sainte-Beuve's rhapsody sounds like a prophecy, precociously fulfilled, of the Franco-Russian alliance, when the Tsar's Arctic subjects no doubt applauded their master's obeisance to the *Marseillaise* and his amity for the Republic. But prophecy is an easier science than history, and the great critic in his enthusiasm ventured on the general statement that the foreigner loved the Revolution as much as did the French. If he had appended that remark to his citation of the three poets, it would have been less controvertible, as in all nations the poetical faculty is bestowed on man in the inverse ratio of his abstract love of law and order. But to couple the general proposition with the name of a foreign statesman, however sympathetic, was misleading; for the distinctive feature of the French Revolution, and indeed the partial justification of its excesses, was the hostile interference of the alien. So when Fox raised his voice in the House of Commons on the occasions cherished by his French admirers, Sheridan was almost alone to echo it. The talent of Sainte-Beuve reached its prolonged maturity when the Revolution was fifty years old, and had attained a wider esteem than it had previously enjoyed. In the early part of the century the career of Napoleon had made the Revolution an object of alarm outside France rather than of admiration. The Restoration was a period of recuperation which was not of a nature to attract much sympathy for France; but when the Monarchy of July came, with its sham air of 1688, then the Liberals abroad vied with the sons of the Revolution at home in their recognition of the grandeur of the palingenesis of France.

¹ *Nouvelle Correspondance.*

It was at this period that Macaulay wrote his famous essay on Barère, and belaboured that despicable member of the Convention with invective well merited, but with violence unworthy of the pen of a master of refined and noble language.¹ Yet amid the foaming torrent of his rage the great apostle of the Whigs becomes calm and judicial when he approaches the subject of the deposition and the death of the King. He complacently approves of the vote of the Convention abolishing the royal office; and when he comes to the regicide, though he mildly chides the timidity and vacillation of the Girondins who voted for it, in palliation he calls attention to the becoming emotion and broken voice of their leader, Vergniaud, when he announced the sentence. All that calls forth his fury in that grim scene is that Barère made a "lying" quotation from an ancient author unknown to Macaulay. Now, apart from the estimate of the personal character of individual Girondins and Jacobins, this attitude of apology for revolutionaries, who confined themselves to regicide, and of reprobation of less moderate reformers, who sent also their colleagues to the scaffold, is consistent with Whiggism. The confiscation of Church property, the execution or the deposition of kings, were beneficent events which in England had put riches and government in the hands of a Liberal oligarchy; but that moderate revolutionaries should incur revolutionary penalties wholesale was unreasonable. Had not Hampden bled on the field and Sidney on the scaffold, and did not those vicarious sacrifices suffice to justify the enjoyment of power and place by their prosperous disciples from generation to generation?

¹ "Macaulay a la main rude; quand il frappe il assomme" (Taine, *Littérature Anglaise*, liv. 5, c. iii.) This appreciation refers to Macaulay's harsh epithets applied to Southey. Taine, in his highly eulogistic criticism of Macaulay's fine qualities, ascribes his vehemence to the passion of the orator which called forth "la fureur de l'invective, l'excès de rancune." The essay on Barère is not mentioned by Taine, who, however, contrasts Guizot's dispassionate attitude towards the history of England in the seventeenth century and that of Macaulay, who lived again every day of the period as a contemporary partisan. But Macaulay did not become dispassionate in treating of the affairs of another country. Barère provoked his wrath just as violently as did Archbishop Laud or Mr. Montgomery.

The services of the Whigs to the English nation were large, and largely were they recompensed ; but the French Revolution was a movement too rapid for them to understand, surveying it from the depths of their arm-chairs. The idea that the flood could have been stayed after the execution of Louis XVI. was as chimerical as all others founded on false and strained analogies between the precipitate French Revolution and the slowly successive political convulsions and reorganisations in England. Later we shall observe some of the ills which have accrued to France in consequence of the superficial resemblance of certain historical events in the two countries. One of them was pleasing the fancy of Macaulay when he wrote his essay in 1844,—the similarity of the position of Louis Philippe on the throne of Charles X. to that of William III. wearing the abdicated crown of James II. He seemed to think that notwithstanding the savage blunders of the Terror, and the interludes of the Consulate and the Empire, France had arrived safely in the haven of limited Monarchy, never to venture again on stormy seas of revolution.¹ The Monarchy of July was in many respects an admirable regime ; but it had one grave defect, that of being wholly unsuited to the political temperament of the people of France. So while Macaulay was complacently patronising those portions of the great Revolution which reminded him of passages in the growth of the British constitution, native glorifiers of heroes of the epoch which had touched the fancy of the Whig essayist were undermining his cherished fabric of limited Monarchy.

An event had just taken place fated gravely to affect the relations of the Revolution and modern France. In 1843 M. de Lamartine joined the Radical opposition in the Chamber where he had sat for ten years. He had not, like Macaulay, been brought up in a school of apology for revolution and regicide. Born in 1790, he was not one of those who imbibed

¹ Twelve years earlier (1832) this idea predominates in his essay on Mirabeau, in which he describes the French Revolution as "a great blessing to mankind,"—the Orleans Monarchy having just been founded.

in infancy the principles associated with that period. An aristocrat by instinct and training, he had attained his fame as the bard of the throne and the altar, poetising the reactionary ideas which proved fatal to the Monarchy of the Restoration. After its overthrow he travelled in the East, bringing thence a stock of visionary ideas which finally turned him into a sentimental revolutionist. When double the age at which some of his new favourites of the Convention died, he announced that the French Revolution was merely an emanation of the idea of Christianity applied to politics.¹ In 1847 he published the literary result of his conversion, and in the history of letters no book ever produced consequences so formidable, so widespread, and so immediate as the *Girondins*. The mind of the public, no doubt, was ready for revolt. The government of M. Guizot was not popular; a wider franchise was demanded; and the people, further irritated against the upper and political classes by the revelation of parliamentary scandal and the murder of the Duchesse de Praslin by her husband, was thrilled with the poet's romantic idealising of the tragic anarchy of the Revolution, and made an end of the limited Monarchy.

At no moment was the French Revolution ever so universally acclaimed as in 1848, and no Frenchman born since the taking of the Bastille has enjoyed idolatry so complete as did Lamartine during his brief hour of popularity. The one element in the nation which had stood hostile to the Revolution now rallied to the movement led by the mystical singer of the sanctuary, and the clergy blessed the Trees of Liberty planted to solemnise the new era. But in vain did Lamartine refuse to accept the red flag which, with grim and ironical logic, the mob wished to impose on the government of the Second Republic sprung from his lyrics. His eloquence prevailed only for a short season over the disorder he had inspired. Before the year ended the people of France used their new franchise to call to the supreme power

¹ "La France parlementaire," vol. iii. (*Écrits et discours politiques de Lamartine*, 1843).

Louis Bonaparte, simply because he bore the name of the soldier of the Revolution who had transformed its anarchy into order. Neglect fell upon the chief maker of the Republic long before it had turned into the Second Empire, and the pathetic vicissitudes of his declining years are a warning to poets not to descend from their dim heights to sport with the prose of modern history and of politics.

Lamartine did not initiate the revival of the revolutionary legend in the middle of the century. It was cherished in some form by all the moderate men of the day, like Sainte-Beuve, who has been quoted, and who scoffed at the profile of *Jocelyn* with which the creator of that romantic hero invested all the orators of the Convention. Among men of less sober opinion Louis Blanc and Michelet had, before the appearance of the *Girondins*, published their Histories of the Revolution which, in glorifying in cruder tones its excesses, were calculated to fire the fanaticism of Jacobins. It was a different audience to which Lamartine appealed. Clothing the revolutionary idea in the music of poetry, he touched a chord in the human heart which the middle-class government had neglected, and attracted to the Revolution those who had regarded it with fear before he turned it into popular epic. His flowery profuseness, unlike the simple style of the great masters of the eighteenth century, or of some of his contemporaries, has lost its charm. Yet even now those who have no illusions left about the heroes of the Convention, who agree with Lally-Tollendal when he said of the Girondins that "their existence and their death had been equally baleful to their country," can be infected with the emotion of the poet when they read his romance of Guadet, at the secret interview with the King and Queen in the Tuileries, kissing the sleeping Dauphin by the light of a taper held by the royal mother; or the description of Vergniaud as the youth who with a gesture had overturned a throne.

The peculiarity of the Revolution of 1848, wherein it differed from the great Revolution, was that it gave the supreme power in the State to the democracy, which, though it had played a

strenuous part all over France in the violent events of the last decade of the eighteenth century, had had nothing to do with the direction of the central government. The Convention of 1792 contained no men of the people; and the heroes celebrated by Lamartine, in the battles between Girondins and Mountain, were members of the middle-class whose domination he helped to destroy in the Revolution of February 1848. The Days of June, in the same year, again differed from every previous revolutionary movement in France, as the aim of the insurgents was not to change the form of government, the Republic then having existed for four months, but to alter the order of society. It was this peril which alarmed the newly-enfranchised population of France; so out of the Parisian barricades arose first the Presidency of Louis Bonaparte, and then its natural consequence, the Second Empire.

M. de Tocqueville, because he had opposed the government of M. Guizot, and was already celebrated as the discriminating eulogist of the new order of democracy, has had his name unduly associated with the democratic Revolution of 1848. He was, however, a close witness of its events, being a member of the National Assembly and for a brief season Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Prince-President. Never was there greater contrast than between the rhapsodic inexactness of Lamartine and the calm discernment of Tocqueville, who, when he died in 1859, leaving studies in political philosophy more valuable than any others produced in the middle of the century, had not attained the age which the poet had reached when he embroiled Europe with his youthful phantasies. The public careers of both were brought to an end by the reaction which ensued from the excesses of 1848. Tocqueville, while he was still holding office under Louis Bonaparte, foresaw that the first durable result of universal suffrage would inevitably be an arbitrary monarchical government. The tendency of the popular voice was to invest the executive with the widest powers in order to be able to repress the dangers menacing public prosperity; and a powerful executive, combined with the centralised system perfected by the

other Bonaparte, could not but lead to Napoleonic dictatorship in the hands of one who bore the Imperial names. Louis Napoleon took care not to let his triumph over the insurrectionaries of 1848 be considered as a victory over the Revolution. While he assailed the new Republic and destroyed its symbols, he persistently declared that the principle which he represented was the Revolution. When acclaimed on his progress through France in 1852 in the interval between the Coup d'État and the proclamation of the Empire, he accepted the cries of "Vive l'Empereur," he said, because his uncle, though he checked the excesses of the revolutionary spirit, had been the chief instrument to cause the benefits of the Revolution to prevail.¹ This legend was maintained till the final scene in the drama of his dynasty, when, from the Imperial headquarters at Metz, Napoleon III. announced that "the glorious flag just unfurled before the enemies of France was the same which had borne across Europe the civilising ideas of the great Revolution."²

The reproduction of the Empire as the first result of popular suffrage in France was a great disillusion to the theorists who regarded sovereignty of the people as an emanation of the Revolution, and the Revolution as the source of liberty. Henceforth there was a tendency among philosophers to defend civil and individual liberty rather than political liberty, and to combat the principle of sovereignty of the people, which had given birth to democratic despotism. The abstract discussions of the Liberal school under the Second Empire had not much effect either in aiding the opposition to the Government or in altering the tradition of the Revolution.³ On the other hand Tocqueville's writings on the Ancient Regime and the Revolution had a certain influence in suggesting the idea that the normal evolution of civilisation might have remedied the evils of the old Monarchy without the violence of the last period of the eighteenth century. The work which, however, was destined to affect the general

¹ Discours de Lyon, 19 Sept. 1852.

² Proclamation du 28 Juillet 1870.

³ *c.g.* the works of Jules Simon, who was the tutor, and of Prévost-Paradol, who was the friend of Taine at the École Normale.

estimation of the French Revolution more seriously than any previous philosophical study or political vicissitude, did not see the light until the Second Empire had gone the way of all the preceding doctrinaire, liberal, or democratic forms of government of which the existence in France had been justified by reference to principles laid down in 1789.

III

In 1854 M. Taine, fatigued by his philosophical researches, which had already given him the repute of an original thinker, sought recreation in reading the *Histoire Parlementaire* of Roux and Buchez, an authority on the Revolutionary period. He was struck with the intellectual mediocrity of the most famous men of that epoch of grandiose renown, and decided that it would be an historical phenomenon interesting to examine. This was the inception of the capital task of his life, his inquiry into the Origins of Contemporary France. Although the work was first conceived in the early days of the Second Empire, at a moment when he was suffering from its arbitrary vexations, there is little trace in it that he had any particular disfavour for that regime. M. Taine had such a power of detaching himself from surrounding circumstances that he was able to bring to bear on modern events in his own country the same powers of independent analysis as are seen in his erudite *Essay on Livy*, or in his *History of English Literature*.

The first volume of the *Origines de la France contemporaine* did not appear until twenty years after his inspiration to examine the genesis and nature of the Revolution, and a quarter of a century after the need for such an inquiry had beset him. Coming of age in 1849, he had found himself invested, by the new system of manhood suffrage, with a vote, in order that he might not only make his choice of men, but show his preference for theories. As he was neither Royalist nor Republican, Democrat nor Conservative, Socialist nor Bonapartist, he envied his neighbours endowed with political convictions, and began to ponder

on the foundations of their faith. The war with Prussia, the Commune, and the harsh conditions of the peace of 1871, had afflicted him before the first pages of the great work appeared. The minute analysis and classification of the persons composing the society under the old Monarchy, together with the rigorous conclusions derived therefrom, portended that his appreciations on the Revolution would not be in harmony with received tradition.

It is said that M. Thiers, in his last days, hearing of the coming work, exclaimed: "He must take care not to touch my Revolution." By the expression "my Revolution" the aged statesman did not refer to his own history of the change of things with which, as a youth, he won a front place in the brilliant literary group of the Restoration. He was giving expression to the sentiment, cherished to the period of his death by most Frenchmen, excepting the fanatics of Legitimism, that the Revolution was a sacred manifestation which might be diversely interpreted, but never profanely assailed. M. Taine did, however, lay desecrating hands on it. He followed the injunction of Sainte-Beuve and studied it as it had never been studied, with a result contrary to that predicted by the older critic. His last work remains one of the greatest monuments of research and diligence ever reared in France, where literary labour is inexhaustible. Its peculiar feature was that it applied to the French Revolution the spirit of criticism which in the eighteenth century was one of the factors in producing the great upheaval. The *esprit critique*, which helped to destroy the Old Regime, lingered in France, and had aided to make government unstable, while it discouraged faith and fostered pessimism; but never before had it been turned upon its own chief work.

The adverse judgments on the work of Taine were to the effect that the minute investigator of the dissecting-room was incapable of discerning through his lens the great organisms and their movements, of which he perceived only a microscopic fragment. It was said that while in his exposure of the excesses of the old regime he dwelt on the waste of wax-candles at Versailles,

he was silent as to the grandeur of France in Europe under the last kings of the ancient Monarchy; that while in revealing the anarchy of the Revolution he gave details of the outrages of village incendiaries, the imposing figure of Mirabeau is unnoticed on his pages; that while he emphasised the private defects of Napoleon, describing how he kicked a senator and seized a marshal by the throat in the council-chamber, he had never a word to say as to how he won the battles of Austerlitz and of Jena. All this may be true, but Taine did not conceive that his mission was to repeat the well known. He said of his work, that before he began it he was inclined to think as most Frenchmen did, only his opinions were an impression more or less vague rather than a faith; while his later iconoclasm was due to the conscientious and exhaustive study of documents. The Revolution was in his view the first application of moral science to human affairs, which were in a lamentable state in France in the reign of Louis XVI., and needed a more practical remedy than the crude philosophy of Rousseau, with its bad method and its false and precipitate solutions. Hence came the catastrophe of 1789 with its sequence, the imperfect reorganisation effected under the Consulate and the Empire. It has lasted all the century and, in his judgment, has been the cause of the political ills which have afflicted France and kept it down from the high place whereon the genius of its people would have set it.¹

The working of the Napoleonic machine of centralisation in combination with parliamentary institutions imported from England, amid a people whose political ideas were formulated in the period of confusion in which the Ancient Regime disappeared, will be a prominent subject of this work. Neither the method nor the conclusions of M. Taine will be followed; but no writer who essayed to deal with the problems of government in France at the close of the nineteenth century could be indifferent to the philosopher who, more than any one person, has modified the aspect of the French Revolution. M. Taine's influence has been

¹ Lettre à M. Havet du 24 Mars 1878.

of a peculiar character. The movement and the resulting phenomena which he criticised were hastened by the critical spirit of the philosophers of the eighteenth century. But their works, considering the smallness of the educated class at that period and the dearness of books, were very widely read. The minor, but more democratic Revolution of 1848 was, as we have seen, influenced by the publication of Lamartine's *Girondins*, of which the circulation was prodigious, edition after edition being read with greater avidity than was ever excited by any romance, though that was the happy epoch when novels were interesting.

The lot of M. Taine's great work has not been the same. It stands on the shelf of every library, yet it is possible that after twenty years not more than two or three thousand Frenchmen have read the six volumes from beginning to end. For the author was forced by the nature of his investigation to depart from the graceful style which had charmed into insensibly studying some of the most profound problems of philosophy the idlest readers of his early works. Almost any of them one can read under a tree on a sunny day with as much ease as a volume of Voltaire or of Diderot, or, if in romantic mood, as Lamartine's legendary history, and with less cerebral fatigue than a modern novel, psychological or naturalist. But the *Origines de la France contemporaine* is a treatise which demands attentive perusal such as only the student can bestow. Yet no modern work so richly rewards the explorer. He finds in it the record of the period, drawn from contemporary chronicles and forgotten archives,¹ describing the life and agitation in village, market-town, and city, with the ideas and passions which moved to action peasant and artisan, bourgeois and functionary, all arranged with that classification and analysis of which Taine was the master.

¹ M. Taine has been censured by his critics for making use of obscure contemporary authorities whose testimony is of doubtful value, but as he once said to me, when talking about the best method of studying history, "Il n'y a pas de mauvais documents." The value of a contemporary record in the hands of a historian depends less on the character or position of the writer than on the use made of it by its discoverer.

Thus the production of this work had no resounding effect in the streets or in Parliament. No election was ever affected by it, no act of the Legislature can be referred to it, and it has rarely influenced the political action of a citizen of France. Yet it deserves the epithet epoch-marking more than any book which this generation has seen. For the most striking tendency in French opinion during the last quarter of the century is the change of mental attitude towards the Revolution; and if the thunderings and lightnings and noise of the trumpet have lost their Sinaitic prestige, so that the great convulsion is now regarded merely as a historical phenomenon like the Wars of Religion under the last of the Valois, or the reorganisation of France by the kings who came next, that result is chiefly due to the intellectual effort of one sedentary philosopher.

IV

Though M. Taine did not anticipate that his work would influence the government or administration of France in his lifetime, one immediate effect of his criticism was the vehement defence of the Revolution by some of its more extreme champions. The centenary of the events succeeding the fall of the Bastille had arrived. M. Sardou in 1891, prematurely celebrating the close of the Terror, produced at the Théâtre Français a play entitled *Thermidor*, representing the downfall of Robespierre in the month of 1794 which bore that name in the Revolutionary Calendar. The House of Molière belongs to the State, and the Terrorists were not amiably depicted by the Academician; so the Radicals pressed the Government of the Republic not to allow scenes of the Revolution to be held up to scorn on the national stage. In the Chamber M. Clemenceau demanded the interdiction of the piece in one of those improvised harangues in which he used to display the keen edge of his trenchant talent. He declared that the Monarchists who applauded the drama had become Dantonists in their desire to have Robespierre held up to

reprobation, and added, "the Revolution is a block from which nothing can be taken away."¹

Apart from the question of representing scenes of recent history at a national theatre, there was much to be said for M. Clemenceau's theory of the "block." The difficulty of applying it to a proper appreciation of the French Revolution is that no two admirers of that movement are agreed as to the composition of the "block." Where did the Revolution end? or where ought it to have ended to merit the praises of right-thinking men? Are we to reprobate Robespierre and approve the acts of Danton, or are our tears to be reserved for the untimely end of the Girondins? Macaulay, as we have seen, seemed to think that if the Convention had stopped at the deposition of the King it would have carried out a praiseworthy revolution on a wholesome English model. Madame de Staël, whose writings had a great influence on the Liberals under the Restoration in their interpretation of the Revolution, conceived that its proper term was 1791, when, but for the Emigration, a constitutional Monarchy might have been possible; so, as the Restoration produced that admirable British institution, 1814 was the direct sequence of 1791, and all that occurred in the interval were illegitimate additions to the great Revolution.² The Radicals who applauded M. Clemenceau's theory of the "block" intimated their approval of the Terror, and in defending the memory of Robespierre showed their adherence to the popular idea that he was a democrat with a thirst for blood. But the more light there is thrown on his grim figure the more clear it seems that he aimed at being a politician of the type known under the Third Republic as "a man of government," and therefore opposed to the views generally held by his modern partisans of the Extreme Left. Napoleon believed that his intention was to re-establish order after destroying all the revolutionary factions. But while he thus appreciated the character of Robespierre, to whom he owed his early opportunities, the

¹ Chambre des Députés, 29 Jan. 1891.

² *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (1818).

career of General Bonaparte might have been restricted had the Terrorist chief survived, for, if he were not playing for his own hand, he probably contemplated the restoration of the Comte de Provence. Some day, perhaps, the correspondence between Robespierre and the future King will reveal the real reason for Louis XVIII.'s favourable opinion of him. Meanwhile, we know that it was he who began the reaction; and though Royalist heads fell wholesale in the Terror, the most conspicuous victims were the leaders of the revolutionary groups, Feuillants, Girondins, Cordeliers, Hébertists, and Dantonists being in turn sent to the scaffold by Robespierre.¹

The Republicans who survived did not make a signal success of the Directory, which led up to the most momentous of all the phases of the Revolution. The Coup d'État of Brumaire, when Bonaparte, returning from Egypt at the end of 1799, seized the supreme power, was so far the most important portion of the Revolutionary "block" that it cannot be dealt with in passing mention. So, before observing its effect, we will pass for a moment to later events in the history of France which have been deemed to form part of the Revolution. The Restoration was hailed by Madame de Staël as the consummation of the upheaval of 1789. But 1830 supervened, when with the definite triumph of the middle-class, as Tocqueville said, "the first period of the Revolution ended, for there has been only one Revolution, the beginning of which our fathers saw, and of

¹ The testimony is chiefly circumstantial which supports the theory that Robespierre was not the victim of Reaction, but was destroyed as a Reactionary by the surviving Revolutionaries, who saw that their turn was coming. Napoleon's strong view on the subject is found in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* and in the *Relation du Docteur O'Meara*. It seems probable that most of the documentary evidence was destroyed. Courtois, a regicide member of the Convention, was charged with the examination of the papers of Robespierre after his fall, but the report he drew up in 1794 was considered by Robespierre's sister to be a mendacious compilation. Courtois had, however, all his correspondence, and seems to have given up to the First Consul the letters which he, when General Bonaparte, had written to Robespierre. Courtois was exiled after the Restoration, but M. Decazes, the favourite and minister of Louis XVIII., was sent after him, just before his death in 1816, and got from him twenty letters written by the future King to Robespierre. Mlle. Robespierre had a pension granted to her by Bonaparte when First Consul, which was continued by Louis XVIII. till 1823, when it was stopped for some reason connected with the Courtois papers.

which we are not likely to see the end.”¹ The downfall of the Monarchy of July produced the democratic phase of the Revolution, the tangible result of which was the Second Empire, created by the first exercise of manhood suffrage. That regime gave way to the Republic; not from the movement of opinion in the direction of Republicanism, though there were signs of such a tendency before the war, but in consequence of military disaster, and the subsequent inability of the Monarchical parties to concert any other form of government.

The more emphatic admirers of the violent portions of the first Revolution, including most of those who specially resent the conclusions of M. Taine, have a theory that the Republic is the sole legitimate offspring of the Revolution. It was ingeniously expounded by an eloquent successor of the Jacobins, M. Challemel-Lacour, whose character much more resembled that of Robespierre than did that of the Radicals, who disliked his authoritative temperament. At the centenary of the First Republic he asserted that “the Republic, since September 22, 1792, had not ceased for a single moment to live its latent life as a Government in reserve for the salvation of the country.”² No doubt it was pleasing for Republicans to feel that the regime of their preference had never ceased to exist since it was set up three weeks after the massacres of September; but the doctrine of latent existence had often been applied by their adherents to other intermittent forms of government in France. It was originally borrowed from England, where the public acts of Cromwell officially belong to the first decade of the reign of Charles II., and there the permanent re-establishment of the Monarchy justified the fiction. In France it has been used

¹ *Souvenirs d'Alexis de Tocqueville*, partie 1. This idea is constantly found in his writings. In the second part of his *Souvenirs* he returns to it in his reflections on the Revolution of 1848. After each change of Government up till then, he writes, “it was said that the French Revolution having accomplished its work, was finished, . . . and here it is beginning afresh. Shall we ever arrive at a social transformation more complete than that which our fathers wanted, or are we merely on the road to that intermittent anarchy, the well-known and incurable malady of old peoples? I often ask if this land, which we have been seeking for so long, exists, or if our destiny is not to plough the sea eternally?” (1850).

² Discours au Panthéon, 22 Sept. 1892.

since the Revolution with less success. It was the basis of Mme. de Staël's idea that the Governments between the abolition of royalty and the Restoration were of no account. It was also adopted by the Comte de Provence, who accordingly was deemed to have inherited the crown on the death of his nephew in the Temple, five months before the Directory came into being: so General Bonaparte won the battle of Rivoli, and the Emperor Napoleon the battle of Jena, in the second and twelfth years, respectively, of Louis XVIII.'s reign.¹ Louis Napoleon, when in 1852 the Senators and Deputies brought the news to him that the plebiscite had made him Emperor, recognised the prevalence of the doctrine, and felt constrained modestly to say to them, "My reign does not date from 1815, but only from this moment of your announcement of the will of the nation."² Nevertheless in styling himself, by accident or design, Napoleon III., he signified that the Empire had continued in the person of the Duc de Reichstadt, who until his death at Schoenbrunn in 1832 was the second Napoleon of the dynasty. The idea of the Republic, ever latent under all other forms of government, is indicated by certain journals of the Extreme Left, which are still dated according to the Revolutionary Calendar, whereof the Year One began on the day commemorated by M. Challemel-Lacour. But the principle underlying it is dangerous to apply to an existing regime in France, as it suggests the possibility of its resuming its state of latency, while another underground stream bubbles up for a visible course.

Thus there is no harmony of opinion either as to the limits of the French Revolution, or as to the form of government which was peculiarly its offspring. If the extreme view of Tocqueville be taken, we may consider the Revolution still in full operation more than a century after its start. But a century after the

¹ Louis XVII. died June 1795; Rivoli was fought in January 1797, and Jena in October 1806.

² St. Cloud, December 1, 1852. The same week in the House of Lords, Lord Malmesbury, who was a personal friend of Louis Napoleon as well as Foreign Secretary, took pains to explain that the title "Napoleon III." implied no pretension to Imperial heredity contrary to the Declaration of the Congress of Vienna.

assembly of the States-General it is not easy to distinguish which social phenomena are the result of the national upheaval, and which the result of the general progress of civilisation in the human race. Our English fathers considered the Revolutionary period to have ended with the second entry of the Allies into Paris in 1815,¹ and the inclusion in it of the First Empire is adopted by modern admirers of the Napoleonic legend who regard its events from a very different point of view. It is impossible to take a date or a crisis, and to say that this was the boundary of the Revolution proper. The twenty years from the Fall of the Bastille to the battle of Wagram perhaps constitute a term convenient to be regarded as the Revolutionary period, as they include both the epoch of disintegration, which alone did not constitute the Revolution, and the succeeding season of reorganisation. From 1809 there was no more constructive policy accomplished by the reconstructor of France. The glories of the Empire for a moment continued to expand ; but the wars and alliances had now departed from their revolutionary basis, and had become the tools of a conqueror's ambition.

V

If the day be past of sentimental enthusiasm for the French Revolution, its close study, while revealing the unheroic horrors of the period, convinces the impartial student that it was inevitable. The pitiless narrative of Taine displays how swift was anarchy to follow the first movement, and how its violent expansion throughout the land was turned to the profit of the disorderly and marauding classes. The material did not exist in France to

¹ A copious work in two large volumes was published at the end of the reign of George III., by "Hewson Clarke, Esq." (who was mentioned in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*), which, though without literary value, is a storehouse of curious contemporary information on the events in France, the British Isles, and Europe during the previous thirty years. FRENCH REVOLUTION is the most conspicuous line of the title-page, which sets forth that it is "An impartial History of the naval, military, and political events in Europe from the commencement of the French Revolution to the entrance of the Allies into Paris, including biographical memoirs of Bonaparte and a narrative of the progress of that Revolution to the conclusion of a general peace."

stem the flood of anarchy once it had begun to overflow. In no other revolution did ideas or abstractions play so large a part, and this was why its early stages appeared grandiose to the imagination. But man is not an abstract being, and theoretical ideas alone could not cause a revolution, even in a community imbued with the philosophy of the eighteenth century. The Revolution was intensified by the preaching and application of crude doctrine, but its cause was the financial disorder of the State and the oppressive incidence of taxation. It was inevitable because of the immense misery and discontent caused, first, by the mismanagement of the public finances together with the extravagance of the Government and the Court, and secondly by the ever-increasing multitude of privileged persons whose exemption from taxation threw the burden more grievously on the poorest portion of the population.

The suppression of that system of privilege was the chief object of the Revolution. It destroyed at the same time the last vestiges of feudalism ; but, as was remarked by a witness of 1789, Chancellor Pasquier, so little remained of feudality that it had become an almost meaningless word, the one question in dispute between the nobility and other citizens being that of pecuniary privilege.¹ Moreover the persons enjoying it were not all members of an exclusive, high-born, or territorial caste, or merely the absentee courtiers of Versailles devouring the substance of their dependents in the luxurious royal circle. Every year, in all parts of France, persons of obscure origin were invested with dignities, sometimes in virtue of judicial or municipal office, sometimes by purchase, which gave them noble rank, exempted them from taxation, and even accorded them the right to exact dues from the most heavily burdened section of the Third Estate. This wholesale multiplication of petty nobility accounts for the great number of families still surviving in France which claim a noble origin of date anterior to the lavish creations of unprivileged titles under the Empire. Moreover, without being ennobled, a large proportion of the bourgeoisie most

¹ *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. i.

capable of paying, including public functionaries and lawyers, as well as the inhabitants of certain towns, enjoyed greater or less exemption. Thus the heaviest imposts fell on the labourers, who had no possession save their tools and their hands, on the inhabitants of the miserable villages of the Old Regime, and on the small proprietors who cultivated their own plots of ground. For it was not the Revolution which made the peasant a land-owner. During the whole of the eighteenth century he had acquired the soil, with a passionate craving, clad in rags and concealing his hoard from the tax-collector till the occasion offered when he could buy cheaply a scrap of land.

The question of the right to levy taxes and of their incidence has in various forms had great effect on the history of revolutions in both hemispheres, and here it touched the population in every corner of the realm. The grievance was so widespread that it produced a general popular movement,—a phenomenon so rare in France that it has never since been repeated, though revolutions have changed its forms of government, and plebiscites have recorded temporary phases of opinion. The universal diffusion of the wrong accounts for the swiftness with which the Revolution spread at an epoch when news travelled slowly. Even a generation later, when M. Jules Simon first came to Paris from Brittany under the Restoration, it took as long to travel from Brest to the capital as is now taken in going from that port to America,—in so primitive a state had the great Revolution left provincial France. Of the slow circulation of news while it was in operation we have a witness from England. When the Bastille fell, Arthur Young was travelling in Alsace-Lorraine, and a fortnight later came to Besançon. "From Strasbourg hither," he writes on July 27, 1789, "I have not been able to see a newspaper. For what the country knows to the contrary, their Deputies are in the Bastille instead of the Bastille being razed, so the mob plunder, burn, and destroy in complete ignorance." Thence he crossed Burgundy, hearing of châteaux being fired or sacked, and inquiring whether it were the work of peasants or of brigands. Yet when he reached Moulins, at the best house-

of-call he "might as well have demanded an elephant as a newspaper: in the capital of a great province, with a National Assembly voting a revolution, not a newspaper to inform the people whether Fayette, Mirabeau, or Louis XVI. is on the throne."

All the doctrines of Rousseau and of the philosophers would not have carried the insurrection beyond the walls of Paris and the great towns, but for the universal unhappiness throughout the length and breadth of France caused by the fiscal system. Its oppressiveness made the people welcome anarchy and join with the marauding class in their work of rapine, while the representatives of the nation in the capital were making the anarchy irremediable by their work of demolition. Here and there in the annals of the Constituent and Legislative assemblies some constructive act is recorded, sometimes of permanent value; but the words which perpetually meet the eye in them are "suppression," "abolition," and "suspension." Many of the men of 1789 began their work inspired with noble motives, but they neglected the precaution which the most elementary architects even among primitive peoples observe, not to destroy the foundations of a fabric which it is intended to remodel if it has to be inhabited during the reconstruction. To the ruin of the edifice of central government was added the confusion of a people in insurrection; and while rhetoricians frothed at the top of the seething society, its dregs were an active element in the angry fermentation which stirred up the whole intermediate mass. France, with all its splendid tradition and civilisation, could not have escaped extinction in this overwhelming and inexorable cataclysm but for an influence which at first aggravated its horrors.

VI

On the 11th of July 1792 the country was declared in danger, and to intimidate the foreign invader was made the excuse for every species of blood-stained excess. Soon, in the words of its apologist, "the guillotine was the only institution in

France and the government was the scaffold,"¹ the King being followed to it by his judges as well as by droves of innocent victims; while humanitarian philosophy had led to such depths of inhuman ferocity that to see unfortunates sent to execution was a spectacle to which the mothers of Paris brought their children.² Nevertheless another current of sentiment was running, which though fierce was not debased. The battalion of Marseillais, which passing through Paris on the way to the frontier was utilised by Danton and Marat in the carnage of the Tuileries on the day of the downfall of the Monarchy, brought with it the song which, though composed in Alsace by a native of Franche-Comté,³ has for ever associated the name of Marseilles with the most thrilling battle-cry of patriotism ever called forth by national peril. Here we see the double phase of the Revolution. The volunteers who massacred the nobles and the Swiss Guard and sacked the palace were mere murderous insurgents; but marching to meet the Prussians at Valmy and Jemmapes they were ennobled into saviours of their country. To have taken part in those two victories of the Revolution was the greatest pride of Louis Philippe. His valour on those fields as the youthful Duc de Chartres, distinguished his revolutionary renown from the sinister record of his father, Philippe Égalité,⁴ chiefly associated with the deeds of the Convention, though he too had taken part in military operations on the frontier.

The grandeur of the Revolution in the eyes of those who had witnessed it, or had received its tradition from actors in it,

¹ Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, livre 52.

² The famous *tricoteuses* who used to attend the sittings of the Revolutionary Tribunal did so by virtue of the Decree of "6 Nivôse An II." (December 26, 1793), passed in the middle of the Terror, which provided that "les femmes pourraient assister aux séances avec leurs maris et leurs enfants et y tricoter."

³ Rouget de Lisle, who was born in the Jura, composed the "Marseillaise" at Strasbourg in April 1792, and it was brought to Paris by the Marseillais who took part in the sack of the Tuileries on August 10, 1792.

⁴ The Duc d'Aumale, who, unlike some of his less distinguished relatives, did not disclaim the Revolutionary tradition of his family, was fond of relating the story of his father's visit to Danton, when Dumouriez sent him to Paris to hear the news of Valmy to the Convention. "Jeune homme," said Danton to the young Louis-Philippe, "ne vous mêlez pas de politique. Laissez nous faire cette besogne et retournez à l'armée."

would not have been apparent without its patriotic aspect and its military glory. The disciples of the men of 1789, who deplored the violence of the subsequent period, might say that in addition to abolishing the Old Regime with its iniquitous fiscal system, they had another high claim on the gratitude of mankind:—they enunciated principles so exalted that the issue of the Declaration of the Rights of Man sufficed to glorify the movement as the era of a perfect gospel. But beauty of sentiment flourished equally in conjunction with the most violent and cruel phases of the Revolution. As Lamartine said of the Constitution drawn up by Robespierre as a prelude to the Terror, “it recalled the pastoral republics of Plato or of Telemachus ; God and the people, justice and humanity, inspiring every page of it.”¹ In nobility of principle the moderate men of '89 have no advantage over the Jacobins of '93. It was the improvident destructiveness of the former and their incapacity to govern which delivered the destinies of France into the hands of the Terrorists. The anarchy which reigned for ten years was the immediate effect of the precipitate overthrow of the ancient authorities, and of the insufficiency and the discord of the new rulers.

If France had not been delivered from that anarchy by the indirect means of exterior military conquest, and reorganised by the same instrument, little would have been heard of the grandeur of the French Revolution, though some of the most ecstatic in its praise are those who most deplore the means which made it glorious, and fashioned out of its chaos a new France. From the life of Barère and its laudatory treatment by Hippolyte Carnot, some idea may be gathered of what the Revolution would have been like without its military aspect. It is clear that a servile, cruel, and cowardly profligate was accounted one of its heroes by the son of one of the few who had brought lustre on the Revolution. But military glory was the sole title to eminence of the name bequeathed to Hippolyte Carnot. As a regicide, as a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and as a Director, Lazare Carnot would have been less remembered than his colleague

¹ *Histoire des Girondins*, livre 39.

Barras,—not having had the conspicuous vices of that other worthy of the unwarlike phases of the Revolution. But as “the Organiser of Victory” he handed down a legend which marked out his estimable grandson to represent France before Europe, when the Third Republic was bringing discredit on democratic institutions, and to save it, it was necessary to show that there were Revolutionary traditions neither sordid nor disorderly.

Not long after M. Sadi Carnot’s election to the Presidency an appreciation of the Revolution was made in its centenary year, remarkable for the circumstances under which it was uttered by one of the most authoritative voices of France. A talented man of letters, in his political capacity an ardent Republican, M. Claretie, the Director of the Théâtre Français, was received at the French Academy by M. Renan. They had first met at the house of Michelet, whose exclusion from that eminent company is regretted by many who do not share the sympathy of M. Claretie for the eloquent historian’s revolutionary enthusiasm. M. Renan, whose iconoclasm was usually applied to legends of origin earlier than 1789, might have been expected to treat the Revolution with the mellifluous optimism, or gentle irony, which he usually extended to modern subjects. But departing from his wonted style he thus addressed the new Academician: “If we turn away from the grandiose fatality of the Revolution all that is left is odious and horrible: a nameless orgie, a monstrous fray into which madmen, incapables, and miscreants rush, told by their instinct that their opportunity is come, and that victory is for the most repulsive of mankind. Every crime and every insanity seem to have united to produce the success of the Days of the Revolution.” This was the language not of an improvised polemic in the lips of a Reactionary, but of an academical discourse pronounced by a sage whose career and opinions made him appear to be a son of the Revolution. It was the centenary of the one year in that epoch which unites nearly all Frenchmen; yet M. Renan having deliberately to choose his phrases and to submit them to his colleagues before uttering them, deemed it right thus to express himself in welcoming to the

Institute the friend of Michelet and the eulogist of Camille Desmoulins.¹

If after the death of Louis XVI. the European coalition had left France to work out its destiny without interference, the Revolution would have had no other aspect in the eyes of posterity than that which provoked M. Renan's unwontedly sombre epithets. Everything indicates that the Jacobins, after devouring the Girondins, would have proceeded to prey on one another, just as they did when the enemy was on the frontier. Nor was the anarchy which desolated the land aggravated by the exterior troubles, excepting in certain limited regions. Robespierre might have restored order had he been given a free hand, but that is an impossible hypothesis. With no other weapon than his civilian blade of the guillotine he could not have set up any authoritative form of government capable of working usefully, or of surviving the horror inspired by its origin. Events would probably have followed the course that they actually took up to a certain point ; for the Directory, which came out of the reaction after the Reign of Terror, was not created by the foreign situation. To the interior Revolution must be wholly ascribed the chaotic administration, the mismanagement of the finances, the dissoluteness and corruption which permeated society. But the enmity of Europe was the salvation of France in the dark hours of the closing century. The army with its valiant achievements alone maintained a standard of conduct and duty in the disorganised nation, which instead of sinking inextricably into the de-

¹ Réponse au Discours de Réception à l'Académie Française de M. Jules Claretie, 21 Février, 1889. The submission of the addresses made on these occasions to a committee of Academicians chosen by lot is not always a mere formality, it being competent for the committee to insist on the alteration or omission of passages which might offend the political susceptibilities of members of the company. Thus M. Émile Ollivier, who was elected in 1870, never pronounced his discourse on Lamartine—whom he succeeded—as he refused to alter in it certain allusions to the Second Empire. They were not considered opportune, the war having intervened between his election and reception, so the formal ceremony of the latter was indefinitely postponed. The same fate befell his projected speech when he was designated to receive M. Henry Martin the historian in 1878. M. Challemeil-Lacour, who succeeded to Renan's chair, evidently did not forget his predecessor's attack on the Revolution, and he bitterly criticised him in his Discours de Réception in January 1894.

moralisation of the Directory, was raised to life again by the vicissitudes of war.

VII

The discipline of warfare with all its ills, and the exhilaration of conquest, would not have sufficed to renew the life of France ; but the battle-field produced a hero and a captain who was also a master of the science of government, of genius never surpassed. The French threw themselves into the arms of Bonaparte, not because they discerned in him the reorganiser of France, but simply as the glorious young conqueror whose martial prestige was the only force sufficient to save the country from the anarchy of the Directory and from civil war. Thus, on landing at Fréjus from the East in the last autumn of the century, his progress to the capital was a triumph,—the victor of Arcola and Rivoli, the pacificator of Campo Formio, who had given Belgium and the Rhine to France, being hailed as liberator.

Arrived in Paris he shuts himself up beneath his domestic roof, having to cultivate acquaintance with his wife, of whom he has not seen much since Barras handed her over to him in 1795, with the command of the Army of Italy as a wedding-present. Josephine is still amiably grateful to the protector who saved her from the guillotine : but the career of the Director, in gallantry as in government, is nearly done, and henceforth Madame Bonaparte will be a relatively respectable wife. Like another handsome adventuress who, under dissimilar circumstances, attained a crown, she had to accomplish the days of her purification. The General keeps quiet and calculates. When he puts on a uniform it is not that which the soldiers of France have followed from the Adige to the Nile, but the coat with the green palm-leaves of the Institute, for his colleagues in which learned company he has opened up the mysteries of Egypt. Though he does not obtrude his military prestige, it is recognised as likely to be a useful instrument in the hands of some talented revolutionary, who, as civil dictator, would restore order. Talleyrand was intriguing ; so was his rival Fouché ; so was Siéyès, a regicide like the latter, an apostate priest

like the former, whose career was not destined to be as lucrative as that of the ex-bishop of Autun. Meanwhile he was a Director at the head of affairs, and is reported to have said that "To save France a sword and a head were necessary." Siéyès was willing that the sword should be that of Bonaparte; but the events which succeeded the Coup d'État of Brumaire were a revelation to the contemporaries of the young general, the nature of whose work is not universally appreciated even by posterity.

Some years ago I was travelling towards the land where the last hope of the Bonapartes fell in savage warfare while wearing the uniform of the army which crushed the founder of his dynasty. At the early close of a tropical day the dark rock of St. Helena rose before us in the sea. At sundown the ship lay at anchor in the roadstead, and night fell on the island with sudden swiftness, In the muffled moonlight of a cloudy evening I rode across the hills which lie between Jamestown and Longwood, where in the mean house upon the heights overlooking the wastes of ocean, across which he used to gaze, I saw by dim candle-light the bare chamber in which Napoleon died. A few hours later, when the ship was leaving behind the grim cliffs in their solitude, my impressions of the lonely ride, which was weird enough to move the least imaginative, were disturbed by the question of an unsentimental traveller, a Scottish legislator, who in the voice of common sense asked who was this Bonaparte, and what title had he to the style of Napoleon the Great? had any of his works survived him save a record of suffering, and had he left anything behind him but a name as barren as the rock vanishing in our wake?

M. Taine, the sternest modern critic of the Emperor, had already answered that inquiry. The work of Napoleon which has survived him is Modern France.¹ The sword which the Abbé Siéyès deemed might clear the way for a civil dictator had performed only a preliminary parade in Italy and in the Orient of the feats it was about to accomplish on more famous fields, from Marengo to Wagram. But the soldier who had wielded it before astonished Europe, displayed the most colossal gifts of government

¹ *Le Régime Moderne*, livre i. c. i.

and organisation ever possessed by a human being, in the interval between two expeditions, which any other commander would have found too brief for repose or for technical study. A young general of thirty, of alien race, who had learned as a foreign tongue the language of the people he was to rule, who man and boy had lived only for fourteen years in France,¹ suddenly appeared ; and being called in to intimidate misrule, instead of returning to his troops when he had restored order, revealed himself by his genius as the master and the chief of the nation. The soldier of fortune, a stranger unversed in civil life, succeeded where philosophers, lawyers, and politicians had failed. He diverted the great movement, which had swept away the old Monarchy and the Ancient Regime, and saved it from dissolving the French nation in anarchy.

While residing in the Brie there were two spots I sometimes passed, in that beautiful region on the south of Paris, which seemed to mark the beginning and the end of the astounding epoch wherein modern France was made, though their historical interest is forgotten. They are only roadside points on the royal highways issuing from the capital, their pavements now deserted by traffic, the one leading to Bâle, the other to Antibes and Italy. On the former stands the village of Boissy St. Léger, where Madame de Staël, arriving from Switzerland on November 9, 1799, made her last change of horses before entering Paris. Just then Barras passed on his way to Gros Bois hard by,—the château then occupied by him, but soon to be given to another son of the Revolution, Berthier, afterwards Prince de Wagram, whose descendant still lives there. It was the “18 Brumaire,” and the gendarmes escorting the fallen Director told the postillions of Madame de Staël what had occurred at the Tuileries ; and she recounts how for the first time since the Revolution she heard a popular name on the lips of men and women. Until then every-

¹ Between Bonaparte's first arrival in France in December 1778, at the age of nine years and four months (when he went to Autun to learn French before entering at Brienne), and November 1799, when he made the Coup d'État of Brumaire at the age of thirty years and three months, he seems to have spent fourteen years and two months in France. Between his twentieth and his thirtieth year he made only one long sojourn in France, the two and a half years before he was appointed to the Army of Italy.

thing had been done by the Constituent Assembly, by the Convention, or by the People; but to-day the human race was no longer anonymous in France, where in every mouth was the name of Bonaparte.

A few miles distant, where the highroad to the south approaches the Seine, fourteen years later a scene took place less dramatic than the better known farewell of Fontainebleau soon to come, but for that reason more pathetic. It was midnight, on March 30, 1814. The campaign of France was over. Napoleon in the supreme struggle had risen to the height of his genius, and in a month had won twelve battles to defend the approaches of his capital against the armies of three nations. But Paris was invested, and in the hope of striking a last blow, he speeds thither as fast as a post-chaise will carry him, leaving his troops at Troyes. While changing horses at the Cour de France, a wayside inn near Juvisy, he hails a squadron of cavalry riding away from Paris. The officer, recognising in the dark the well-known voice, halts and gives him the news of the day: the Empress and Joseph Bonaparte in flight, the capitulation signed, and the Allies to enter Paris in the morning. All through the night he paced the bleak road, refusing to believe that it was too late to press on to his capital, where his presence alone would undo Marmont's defeat and Talleyrand's treachery. The chilly dawn broke before he could be forced into the cabriolet which bore him to Fontainebleau,—while the Tsar Alexander was consenting to be Talleyrand's guest in the rue St. Florentin, where he decided that the French should enjoy a copy of the British Constitution, and ordered his Cossacks to aid the Parisians in displacing for the first time the statue in the Place Vendôme. Two obelisks mark the spot where the Emperor heard that the Empire was ended, but though the weather-worn inscriptions are older than this roadside tragedy, they are significant. One sets forth how "*Ludovicus XV, rex Christianissimus, viam hanc antea difficilem, arduam et pene inviam fieri curavit.*" The other in French says that the monuments were restored "in the reign of Napoleon the Great."

"Napoleon the Great" was again spoken of as "Bonaparte" in the fickle capital the night that he trod his Calvary on the steep which he climbed by the road made by the King whose subject he was born only forty-four years before. His career was done, save for the epilogue of the Hundred Days, at an age when men, excepting the heroes of the French Revolution, are on the threshold of public life. It is a coincidence which has not been noticed, that at the moment when the great Emperor became Bonaparte again, he was day for day the same age as was his nephew, Louis Napoleon, when he dropped the family name to become an Emperor.¹ He was younger when he had completed the work which gives him his title of greatness. Twenty years after the Revolution, ten years after his return from Egypt, it was all finished. If in 1809 he had fallen at Wagram when he was thirty-nine, his renown would have been almost unimpaired; though even then, having accomplished the reorganisation of France and become the master of continental Europe, his ambition had impelled him to his first fatal step, the invasion of Spain.

But, before the ambitious conqueror had got the better of the ruler and the organiser, he had accomplished work which at the end of the century, after revolutions and invasions, after changes of dynasty and misgovernment of every form, lasts as the solid foundation and framework of French society. The whole centralised administration of France, which in its stability has survived every political crisis, was the creation of Napoleon and the keystone of his fabric. It was he who organised the existing administrative divisions of the departments, with the officials supervising them and the local assemblies attached to them. The relations of Church and State are still regulated by his Concordat. The University, which remains the basis of public education, was his foundation.

¹ Napoleon, born August 15, 1769, on March 30, 1814 (the last day of the Empire, a provisional Government being set up the next day), was aged 44 years and 227 days. Louis Napoleon, born April 20, 1808, on December 1, 1852 (the last day on which he used the name of Bonaparte, being proclaimed Emperor on December 2), was also aged 44 years and 227 days.

The Civil Code, the Penal Code, the Conseil d'État, the Judicial System, the Fiscal System,—in fine every institution which a law-abiding Frenchman respects, from the Legion of Honour to the Bank of France and the Comédie Française, was either formed or reorganised by Napoleon. No doubt the Revolutionary assemblies sometimes paused in their work of demolition to essay a constructive project. The Constituent Assembly created the departments; the Directory remodelled the Institute; and Condorcet might have carried out his schemes of education had not his colleagues of the Convention driven him into suicide to escape the guillotine. But when Bonaparte arrived in France in 1799 from the camp and the battle-field, he found that the result of the Revolution, for ten years in the hands of jurists, rhetoricians and theorists, was chaos. It was illumined with a few streaks of light which displayed the fragmentary beginnings of well-conceived designs. It was none the less a chaos, needing the inspiration of a creator to evolve order from it, and the authority of a master of men to utilise the misapplied intellects of that erratic epoch.

The institutions of the Napoleonic establishment survive, not as historical monuments, but as the working machinery which regulates the existence of a great people at the end of the nineteenth century. Their minute examination shows that they operate satisfactorily. M. Taine and other critics of the Napoleonic reorganisation say it was imperfect, and ascribe to it many of the ills from which France has suffered. It was not perfect: no human work is. Yet admirably suited to the French temperament is the organisation which, created in less than a decade amid the alarms of war, has not only performed its functions for three generations, but stands erect as the framework to keep French society together amid the fever of insurrection or the more lingering disorder of parliamentary anarchy, just as though it owed its stability to the growth of ages.

It is hard to see what other form the reorganisation of

France could have taken. Had constitutional government been essayed to cope with the anarchy, the social edifice demolished at the Revolution could never have been reconstituted. Napoleon seemed to be called into being, a miraculous or at all events an abnormal figure, to save the existence of France. That his work has lasted without any serious effort to upset it shows how good it was. The conjunction with it of a parliamentary Monarchy was anomalous; but Napoleon himself made that unnatural combination inevitable. At first his peaceful work of construction advanced with the development of his military genius. Marengo was followed by the organisation of the Church and of education; and from the council-chamber where he set his own impress on the Code to bear his name, he sped across Europe to win the fields of Austerlitz and Jena. But when the marvellous union of talents had brought France in a few years from the brink of disruption to an unequalled height of splendour and prosperity, then his character degenerates. The lawgiver, the organiser, the statesman disappear. He is only the conqueror, conscious of his skill in the terrible game of war which distorts his imagination and drags him in a furious wanton course to Madrid, to Moscow, and to Leipsic—till we find him, by a strange irony, after his most consummate exhibition of strategy, wandering on a March night on the road-side near Paris, deserted by his wife, his kindred, his marshals, his counsellors, who owed to him their place and name in the world.

Madame de Staël, writing soon after his final downfall, said, "Many people hold that if Bonaparte had undertaken the invasion neither of Spain nor of Russia he would still be Emperor; but he had need of war both to establish and to preserve absolutism. A great nation would not have endured the monotonous and degrading weight of despotism, if military glory had not continually roused and animated public sentiment."¹ The accomplished daughter of Necker had two strong passions—

¹ *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, partie iv. c. 19.

a hatred of Napoleon who had persecuted her, and an affection for the liberties of the British Constitution. But the least prejudiced spectator, writing when France was worn out, weary of useless slaughter, subjugated to the foreigner and mutilated, had the right to think that the monster of ambition who caused these calamities could never have taken his place as the peaceful ruler of the nation which he had led first to triumph and then to disaster. If the discussion of hypothetical contingencies, so tempting in tracing the political history of modern France, were not futile, much might be said on the other side. It seems as though Napoleon, after he had done his great work of organisation, and had given to the army eleven years of legitimate glory from Castiglione to Friedland, had an unexampled opportunity of ruling peacefully a contented people. Save for the Royalist plots, there was then no symptom of discontent with the authoritative regime which Madame de Staël called despotism, but under which there was more liberty than in the despotism of the Convention or in the despotism of the subsequent anarchy. Had her life not ended two years after Waterloo she would have soon seen that the limited monarchy of her desire was capable of oppression,¹ without even the excuse of public disorder as at the time of the White Terror. She might have also realised the vanity of her theory, that the Restoration took up the tale of the Revolution where it was interrupted by violence in 1791, and that the intervening events formed a deplorable interlude outside the progressive history of France.

Looking back from the end of the century to its first three decades, we perceive a phenomenon which precisely contradicts the idea running through the treatise of Madame de Staël. The period wherein the rightful kings of France reigned over the

¹ Madame de Staël, after the first Restoration, began to protest against the increasing oppression by the clergy and the émigrés, and would have agitated opinion against the restored monarchy but for the return of Napoleon.—*Correspondance de Talleyrand et de Louis XVIII.* (1814). In 1822 her daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie, thanked God that she had not survived to see all her hopes set at naught.—*Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, vol. iii.

realm restored to them, seems in spite of the brilliant literary renaissance which dawned in it, politically obscure after the years which had gone before. Louis XVIII. and Charles X. had grown into manhood in the ancient Court, taking part in its pleasures, its intrigues, and its politics. Yet these princes, who had been foremost figures in a society never equalled for stateliness and grace, made but a mean appearance on the throne and in the palaces of their fathers when they recovered their inheritance,—though the elder of them was a statesman of high ability, and was a good king, who reigned with sagacity during the first years of repose necessary for the renewal of the forces of France. Had they come back recalled to France to restore order after anarchy, they might each have presented a more imposing figure to history. But it was not to Revolutionary disorder that these monarchs succeeded. It was the great son and organiser of the Revolution whom they came after, dwarfed by him who had filled Europe with his presence, and whose constructive work has remained when the traces of his mad havoc have disappeared.

After the prudent reign of Louis XVIII. had ended in 1824, Charles X. decided to be crowned in the cathedral of Reims with all the pomp with which the Church had honoured the royal guardians of her eldest daughter, on the spot associated for ages with the assumption of the purple of France. To this altar Joan of Arc had brought Charles VII. to be anointed with the holy chrism. Here the Grand Monarque, a child of sixteen, had received the crown in the presence of his mother, Anne of Austria, and of the Italian cardinal who had usurped his father's place. Here Charles X. himself, when Comte d'Artois, had assisted fifty years before at the coronation of his fated brother Louis XVI. and of Marie Antoinette. Louis XVIII. had dispensed with the sacred ceremony. When he succeeded *de jure* the cathedral of Reims was not accessible to the family of Bourbon, and in France the heads of kings were then associated with instruments other than crowns. But the aged monarch who came next decreed that the holy phial brought down from heaven for the baptism of Clovis should be broached once more for him.

Though its virtues could not preserve his kingship even for the few years left of his span of life, perhaps the event was worthier of resounding celebration than it seemed to spectators ; for now we know that it was to be the only occasion for a century and a quarter on which a ruler of France succeeded his predecessor by hereditary right.

Between the two ceremonies in which Charles of Bourbon had played a part there had been another coronation in France. Not in the royal shrine of Champagne, but at Notre Dame de Paris, a dozen years after the anointed head of Louis XVI. had fallen within sight of its towers, while the Comte d'Artois was reposing in safety at Holyrood, took place the most imposing consecration of a monarch that Christendom had ever seen,—for the Vicar of Jesus Christ came from Rome to assist at it. It was not in the English, but in the French sense of the word that Pius VII. assisted at the coronation of Napoleon ; for the captive Pope sat a spectator while the amazing conqueror placed with his own hands the crown on his head. The last witnesses both of that scene and of the coronation of Charles X. twenty years later have gone ; but we have some idea why the audacious splendour of the upstart pageant paled and made unreal the legitimate revival of the regal sacrament. Two painters who were present, David and his pupil Gérard, have left us their respective impressions on the walls of two noble galleries once the ante-chambers of kings of France. Observe the sumptuously attired personages of the Imperial retinue reproduced in the rich colouring of the Revolutionary painter. Kneeling before her husband, and unheeding the gesture of benediction of the Pontiff, is Josephine, ex-mistress of Barras, to-day Empress of the French, and, unlike her heir-desiring master, destined to have a descendant to rule over France. Soon she will pay the penalty for the ill-timed term of her fruitfulness ; and when the Creole's place is taken by a daughter of the Emperors of the West, the Church, whose chief on earth is here to-day, will show its flexibility by blessing the new union while she lingers neglected at Malmaison. The minister of the Church who will unite his nephew, the successor

of Louis XVI., to the niece of Marie Antoinette is here too.¹ Caesar's uncle eight years ago had lost his holy vocation, and instead of a village priest in Corsica was a commissary in the Army of Italy; but the Consulate revived the ancient faith in many breasts, and Cardinal Fesch had been Primate of the Gauls already three years when, a Prince of the Church, he escorted the Pope to France. Here is another who had worn the violet of prelates in the previous reign when it was rarely accessible to sons of the people like Joseph Fesch; but, apostate and unmitred, Talleyrand does not shun pious ceremonies, nor even the presence of the keeper of the Fisher's Seal.

Now if we pause to examine David's picture at the Louvre we do so not because it represents with skill an isolated scene of historic interest, but because it reveals the making of modern France and even of modern Europe. It is the apotheosis of the French Revolution; it is the consecration of its organisation by armed force. Napoleon incarnates first the triumph of the populace over the Ancient Regime and then the organisation of the people into omnipotent military despotism. The Papacy has, in its eternal wisdom, frequently shown indulgent complacency for the disorders and delicts of great rulers who have represented great dynasties and long traditions; but there is not one among this brilliant throng blessed by the Pope who represents any tradition. Without the Revolutionary victories of Castiglione, of Rivoli and Marengo, they would be a band of nameless adventurers and adventuresses headed by an unfrocked priest; but they are the satellites of the risen star of military genius, and the successor of St. Peter quits the apostolic threshold to mingle with them. Presently his example will be followed by the occupants of the proudest temporal thrones of the Continent,

¹ Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie (b. 1763) by her first husband, Alexandre de Beauharnais (guillotined in 1794) was the mother of Hortense, Queen of Holland, who was mother of Napoleon III. Joseph Fesch (b. 1763) was step-brother of Laetitia Ramolino, mother of the Bonapartes. He renounced his holy orders under the Terror and became a Commissary of the army in 1796. On Napoleon becoming Consul he resumed his orders and was Archbishop of Lyons in 1801 and Cardinal in 1803. The Empress Marie-Louise, daughter of Francis, last Emperor of Germany and first Emperor of Austria, was grand-niece of Marie-Antoinette, and married Napoleon in 1810.

when Austerlitz and Jena have made them the vassals of the soldier crowning himself with the crown of Charlemagne.

Hence it is that whatever vulgarity there may be hidden beneath the scarlet and the purple and the ermine crowded on the floor of Notre Dame, the force and audacity of the scene made any other manner of coronation in France henceforth ridiculous. Before glancing at the second picture we may reflect that some of the materials which gave David his subject are still ready to hand in France. The world will probably never see another Napoleon. But a leader with the genius of one of his marshals may one day realise that the conquering armies, which made Bonaparte Emperor, were a handful of ill-equipped levies compared with the disciplined legions which the French democracy now maintains on a war footing, at the disposal of a soldier of fortune who touches the popular fancy.

The other picture, at Versailles, represents a masquerade which imposes on no one. The costumes and the architecture are the same which are familiar in paintings and prints of bygone coronations at Reims; but we recognise some of these faces as having taken part in certain events and movements which have altered the face of Europe since the hero of to-day assisted at his brother's crowning. The old King is embracing the Dauphin amid the acclamations of his companions of the Emigration, and of certain others. Had there been no Salic Law to prevent the consort of the heir to the throne from becoming Queen of France and Navarre when she emerged from the Temple, whence her father and mother had gone to the guillotine, and where her brother had succumbed, history might have taken a different turn; for Napoleon himself recognised in the Duchesse d'Angoulême the only man of her family. The applauding émigrés are not the only audience in the cathedral. The two Cardinal-Dukes who officiate at the anointing are aided in the after ceremony by two Marshal-Dukes whose names and titles were unknown to the Old Regime; for they bear them by the favour of the self-crowned Emperor who died at St. Helena four years ago. So Mortier, Duc de Trévise, and Soult, Duc de Dalmatie,

have offered the hand-of-justice and the sceptre to the King. The grim old marshals who would have been sergent-pensioners of a royal regiment but for the Revolution, for which they fought, perhaps think it better to spend a morning tripping in silk and satin with lowly obeisance on the carpet of *fleurs de lys* than to be taken out behind the Luxembourg and shot like their comrade Ney. The shoes of liliated velvet have been humbly put on the royal feet by the ubiquitous one ever ready to bend the knee to any master. Louis XVI., Constituent Assembly, Convention, Directory, First Consul, Emperor, are all the same to M. de Talleyrand, who is equally ready to betray them in turn. The Prince de Bénévent alone of his prodigious generation personifies the Revolution in all its phases ; so when it takes that of a royal masque he plays his part in it with consummate art. His performances are not yet done. Thirteen years are yet to run before the Abbé Dupanloup will be called to the rue St. Florentin to hear a confession perhaps more interesting than the published memoirs of Talleyrand. He has one more master to serve who is here to-day. We all know that the head of the Orleans family is, after the children of France, always the first Prince of the blood, since the renunciation of the Spanish Bourbons. So here is Louis Philippe erect at the right of the throne just as he used to mount guard at the door of the Jacobin Club in his youth, when his cousin d'Artois, King to-day, had fled to Coblenz, and when his father Philippe Égalité was meditating how he might supplant Louis XVI. without sending him to the scaffold.

The coronation of Napoleon, with all its magnificent effrontery, was the apotheosis of the Revolutionary settlement. The crown which the soldier of fortune assumed that day departed from his head ; but the spectacle symbolised the result of the Revolution, the civil reconstruction of France by a military adventurer. The phase of the Revolution which was proclaimed that day, the Empire, did not last ; but its work survived it, making vain all attempts to ignore the change of things. Hence the coronation of Charles X. was a mere travesty, though the chief mime was the lawful heir of St. Louis. All it led to was

the Revolution of July for the benefit of the family of the regicide Orleans, while outside the royal fête the people responded with a demonstration, when in ominous thousands they bore to the grave General Foy, a hero of the Grande Armée.

Not that the tradition of the Empire was generally popular under the Restoration. On the contrary, the removal of the scourge of war from a nation exhausted by twenty years' drain of life-blood was a relief so exhilarating that the blitheness of the French people is one of the most notable features of that curious epoch. Defeat, loss of territory, and foreign invasion, had none of the grievous effects which our generation has seen produced on the French nature by similar misfortunes comparatively slight. Save to his old soldiers, the memory of Napoleon was a nightmare to the French in the early days of the Restoration, when Victor Cousin dared to say of Waterloo that it was the triumph of liberty over despotism. It is interesting to follow the fluctuations of French sentiment towards Napoleon. The rock of St. Helena was the first cause of the metamorphosis. Had another Elba been found for him in European waters, had he ended his days in a suburb of London or of Vienna, spying the amours of Marie Louise, composing manifestoes to the people of France, or plotting to reappear in their midst, his legend would have never revived, though his constructive work would have remained. But the *Memorial of St. Helena*, coming forth from the tomb on the desert island, was the gospel of a miraculous apostolate; so he who for the last portion of his career had imperturbably sent men to death by myriads in the pursuit of his insensate ambition, was transfigured into "the Christ of the French Revolution, wickedly nailed to the rock by the malice of kings." Without St. Helena, Béranger's ballads might have pleased the veterans of the Grande Armée and charmed future generations by their literary beauty; but there would have been little need for the government of the Restoration to imprison the poet, who afterwards gave his aid to the Revolution of July which brought back the tricolour.

Louis Philippe in turn encouraged the revival of the legend

by sending his son to bring home the Emperor's ashes. Finally, when the middle-class Monarchy was upset, the name of the hero and martyr of the Revolution was so cherished in the newly-enfranchised democracy that its inheritance bore his nephew to popular dictatorship. The Second Empire did not increase the prestige of the Napoleonic tradition. It seemed to have incurred eternal execration when the dynasty fell amid the same woodlands of the Ardennes where Dumouriez had led his raw levies to the first victories of the Revolution, and had associated the name of Sedan with repulse of invasion before the fame of Bonaparte was ever heard of in France. The years after the Franco-German war mark the lowest depths of misesteem attached to the Napoleonic legend since Las Cases published the *Memorial*. Lanfrey had already essayed to damage it when the events of 1870 came as a commentary to his work. But as the memory of the Second Empire receded a reaction commenced: so when Taine published his unflattering portrait of Napoleon the controversy roused by it showed that there was a renaissance of feeling in favour of the soldier of the Revolution. The rife-ness of Parliamentary anarchy and scandal, not unlike that which Bonaparte suppressed, helped to turn the revived sentiment into a cult and a passion, which, however, had only a literary development.

But it is to be noted that whatever sentiment prevails for the moment in France with regard to the character and career of Napoleon his work endures unaffected. Under the Restoration of the legitimate kings, under the Revolutionary Monarchy of the Orleans branch, under the Plebiscitary Empire, and under the Parliamentary Republic, the Napoleonic construction forms the unchanging basis of the administration and life of the country, whatever forms of legislative and executive powers the constitution of the moment has set up. Consequently, whether we regard Napoleon as M. Taine's mediæval Italian condottiere, who strongly resembles the Corsican ogre of our forefathers, or as the idyllic Little Corporal with his grey military coat; whether we are dazzled with the audacity of the coronation scene, or shocked

at the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, we have to recognise that his constructive work remains the framework of modern France, and that its stability resists time and vicissitude. Decentralisation has been the subject of a thousand pamphlets; the revision of the Concordat is a venerable article of reform; the system of education has been improved and the tribunals have been increased; but the Napoleonic settlement of the Revolution lasts. Moreover, nothing survives of the Revolution but what was established by Napoleon. So, now that a century has passed since the great change of things, we see clearly that its chief tangible result was the authoritative centralised government established by him whom Mme. de Staël called a Robespierre on horseback, thus recognising the revolutionary character of his work. But the absolutism of Napoleon was necessary and salutary for the reconstruction of France; and that he organised the chaos of the Revolution into a fabric, of which the use by three generations has displayed the suitability, is a proof of his providential genius.

CHAPTER II

LIBERTY

I

BEFORE we examine the working of the institutions under which France is governed at the end of the nineteenth century, and their connection with the great Revolution, we may first inquire what has been the fate of certain principles laid down at that epoch. It is especially interesting to observe the attitude of the French to those paraded in the device of the First Republic, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," which in 1848 was reiterated in the Constitution¹ promulgated the month before Louis Bonaparte was elected President of the Second Republic. On the third occasion when France established that form of government, it voted a Constitution containing no declaration of principle and no promise of Liberty. The Republic, however, set up again the motto which the Prince-President had removed from public buildings when he rooted up the Trees of Liberty planted by the enthusiasts of 1848. Not that it is certain that the inscription broadcast of the name of Liberty, together with those of its accompanying virtues, is the best means of imposing its principles on citizens. The sight of it, for instance, on the portals of the State prisons is more suggestive of those metaphysical discussions in which the French have sought to define the term, than of Liberty in the eyes of commonplace man.

A visit to Oxford led M. Taine to the conclusion that meta-

¹ Constitution du 4 Novembre 1848.

physics did not flourish in England.¹ The absence of the science, in which he was an adept, did not attenuate his praise of our literature; for in it he recognised that the unphilosophic terminology wherein we clothe our ideas has been an advantage in the history of the nation. Thus we are more practical in our treatment of Liberty, which, to a Frenchman, is a dogma to define or to expound rather than a factor in the every-day life of a community. This conception partly accounts for the durability of the fiction that the Revolution was the era of Liberty, the exact contrary being the fact. The emancipation of modern thought was effected by the philosophers who were the products of the Ancient Monarchy, which let them air their doctrines with little hindrance. Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot all contributed to the Revolution; but had they lived until the Terror, they would, in spite of their advanced years, have probably shared the fate of Lavoisier and of Malesherbes,² unless they had cheated the guillotine, as did Condorcet in his cell. Each of those philosophers was arrested under a warrant which bore first on its face the word Liberty. Malesherbes, best known as the intrepid advocate of Louis XVI., was the friend of Rousseau, and under his administration, as a royal official, had appeared the *Encyclopædia*. Jean-Jacques had been exhumed to pompously follow Voltaire to the Panthéon a few months before his venerable friend perished, with his daughter and his granddaughter. On the same scaffold some days later the illustrious Lavoisier died, who, begging that his execution might be postponed till he had completed his last great experiment, was told by the public prosecutor that "the Republic had no need of savants and chemists."

It was thus that the apostles of Liberty, who had survived the Ancient Monarchy of their origin, were treated in that stage of the Revolution which had Liberty for its official device. If

¹ *Littérature Anglaise*, livre v. The metaphysical currents, which led to the Revolution, are critically analysed by Taine with great skill and lucidity in the *Ancien Régime*, livre III.

² Voltaire and Rousseau died in 1778; Diderot in 1784; Condorcet committed suicide in March 1794; Malesherbes was guillotined in April, and Lavoisier in May 1794.

Rousseau and Diderot could have lived through it to its next period, the Napoleonic regime, their heads would have been in less danger than at the time when the cult of Liberty was official. But they would have experienced a severer supervision of their philosophy under the Revolutionary dictatorship than under the Old Monarchy which they helped to shatter. Under Napoleon they would have had to choose between putting forth their thoughts in exile and keeping silence in the land which had won its liberty. Or they might, under paternal restraint, have aided the organiser of the Revolution in his reconstruction of France, as did Tronchet,¹ the friend of Mirabeau, in the preparation of the Code. It was only when the allied anti-Revolutionary sovereigns forced back its ancient line of kings on France that it began to enjoy a taste of the liberty which the philosophers had preached, and which the Revolution had checked while making great parade of the principle.

The First Year of Liberty in the Revolutionary Calendar began on September 21, 1792,² and the previous night, after Valmy, by the bivouac fire, Goethe had said, "On this spot and on this day has commenced a new era for the history of the world." The poet's observation was accurate; but the new era, which dated from the defeat of the royal troops of Prussia by the conscripts of the Revolution, was not the epoch of Liberty of which he presaged the dawn. Sixteen years later at Erfurt, he had occasion to recognise the nature of the era inaugurated by the army of the Revolution, when he talked with Napoleon, who, in the plenitude of his glory and absolutism, had summoned thither the autocrat of Russia to discuss with him the maintenance of the continental blockade.³ The intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century, led by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopaedists, was checked by the political revolution which it helped to cause. In 1789, the friends of liberty in all countries hoped that the violent movement initiated

¹ Tronchet, like Malesherbes, is best known as one of the valiant advocates of Louis XVI.

² It was a year later, 1 Vendémiaire, An II., that the Calendar began to be used.

³ October 1808.

in France to sweep away the oppression of the Old Regime would lead to the triumph of their principles. But, as M. Taine demonstrates, from the first moment of the uprising there was never any hope for a philosophic resettlement of society. The spontaneous anarchy, which was immediate, swiftly became the prey of the Jacobin conquest, the despotism of disorder, which needed the high-handed discipline of military dictatorship to master it.

The association, therefore, of the idea of Liberty with the Revolution, or at all events with that phase of it which established the Republican form of government, is conventional. If this were generally admitted, there would be no reason to advert to the severe restrictions on liberty under the regime claiming to be the particular offspring of the Revolution, or to the spirit hostile to liberty which is rife in France a century after that era of emancipation. If the inscription on coins and on public buildings, "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité," were merely an official badge we should take no more serious notice of it than of the heraldic motto of a distinguished family referring to some more or less authentic adventure in its history, out of keeping with the character of its present members. The chief objection to it would be its length, as painted in black characters it often defaces a handsome monument; and we could wish that the Third Republic had chosen a less sprawling device, like the S.P.Q.R. of the municipality of modern Rome, which for other reasons is equally inapt. But voices of authority in the Republic tell us that the official placarding of Liberty and the other words is symbolical of the efflorescence of the doctrine implied in them under the present regime, which inherited it from the Revolution. If we take up the challenge we shall perhaps find that the apparent inconsistency in theory and in practice is partly due to the fact that in France Liberty is a mere subject of the class-room and the library.

The study of philosophy, of which M. Taine noted the absence at our chief seat of metaphysical learning, is not neglected in France. Before the age at which youths enter the

English Universities the toiling schoolboys of France are dipping into studies similar to those which only a few of the most diligent pupils of Oxford cultivate several years later. As an intellectual training the education in the public schools of France is superior to that which burdens the resources of English parents of moderate means, while tending to turn our nation into a muscular plutocracy. The good and evil of the French system I hope to examine before long. Here we have only to glance at its working with regard to the principle and practice of liberty. The young Frenchmen who correspond to our sixth-form boys have studied the theories both in antiquity and in French philosophy; but when they get up from their books their surroundings make them feel that what they have learned about Liberty has no more practical bearing on modern life than the geography of the *Odyssey*, or the agriculture of the *Georgics*. A Frenchman often likens a *Lycée* in its interior economy to a barrack, or to a prison, and, unless he were a day scholar, looks back to his school-days as a period of servitude in which, sleeping and waking, he was subject to perpetual espionage. There is no sadder spectacle on the gay scene of Paris than that of the mournful processions of bearded youths in collegiate uniforms promenading the *Champs Élysées* under the eyes of their ushers.

During the rest of his career a French citizen, if of law-abiding temperament, may experience no encroachments on his liberty. The notion that a resident in France is the prey of constant official vexation is exaggerated, and there is no country where under normal circumstances life can be enjoyed more tranquilly. At the same time he is exposed to accidents which remind him that the chief tangible result of the French Revolution was the voluntary submission of the nation to the tyranny of absolutism, as the following case will show. A commercial clerk, after his day's work, is showing to his children, in M. Armand Dayot's popular pictorial history of the Revolution, the reprints illustrating the horrors of the Bastille. We know now that the demolition of that fortress revealed that the rare prisoners interned in it, in 1789, were not friends of Liberty and had not

much to complain of.¹ But the massacre by the mob of Governor de Launay had to be justified, and the prints of the period represent the insurgents rescuing the captives just as the rats were about to devour them on the 14th of July. So the good father explains to his sons the nature of a *lettre de cachet*, and the iniquity of a system destroyed by the glorious Revolution, which permitted a citizen to be thrown into prison without trial—when a knock is heard at the door. A police officer enters with a warrant to arrest the man on the charge of defrauding his employers: he protests his innocence and is carried off.

So far the proceedings might have occurred in any free country, even in the case of a man unjustly taken into custody. But the next steps, which a whole generation under the Third Republic has submitted to, are not suggestive of life under a democratic parliamentary regime, of which the official fête is the anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille. The accused person is locked up in solitary confinement, cut off from communication with his family, and in private audience interrogated day after day by a magistrate, who strives to extort an avowal. Meanwhile all the forces of the police are at work to get up evidence against the untried prisoner, of the nature of which he is kept ignorant; while the *juge d'instruction*, in his interrogatories, uses the craft of a skilled expert to drag damaging admissions from the mouth of the man, bewildered with the isolation of captivity, sometimes browbeating him with threats, sometimes inventing the fiction that an accomplice has proved his guilt. Until the twenty-eighth year of the Republic, only when at last committed for trial was the accused allowed to consult a lawyer for his defence. The system of "secret instruction" flourished intact during a generation of democratic rule—sometimes indeed criticised in the press when it gave rise to some glaring scandal, such as the suicide of an unfortunate, conscious of his innocence, yet crushed with the anxiety of his situation; or when an

¹ M. Gaston Deschamps, who has studied the subject, finds that only six or seven men were in custody on July 14, 1789, none of whom were political prisoners, four being forgers, and all were well lodged and fed. The infamous Marquis de Sade was an inmate of the Bastille shortly before that date.

eloquent advocate, by picturing to the jury the hardship of the ordeal, restored his client to his family broken in health and fortune. But the majority of the victims belong to the criminal class. Consequently in a nation where the principle of the Habeas Corpus Act is revered only by a few theorists, it is not easy to effect a fundamental change for the sake of sparing from wrong an occasional honest citizen of the Republic who falls under the suspicion of the agents of justice. Thus the prolonged tolerance of such a system in a nation where universal suffrage is supreme, and where the freedom of the press in denouncing institutions is of unbridled license, has shown that its idea of liberty has a peculiar and special signification.¹

A less tragic experience of the national conception of Liberty may befall a French citizen suspected of mere irregularity. To realise the plenitude of his privilege in living under a Republic, he leaves his home one day to hear M. Aulard, the lecturer at the Sorbonne, demonstrate that human happiness reached its greatest height under the regime proclaimed in 1792. As he returns past the statue of Danton he wonders how the countrymen of that lover of liberty could have submitted to the Second Empire, when even the domicile of a citizen was not exempt from violation. Thus reflecting he reaches his door. A scene of disorder awaits him: the drawers of his study, the cupboards

¹ Criminal procedure was at last somewhat modified in the 28th year of the Republic by the efforts of M. Constans, after the exposure of the evils of the "secret instruction" by an eminent public prosecutor, M. Jean Cruppi. But law reformers are sceptical about the practical results of the reform (which permits an accused person to employ an advocate during the private preliminary inquiry), as there is no prospect of the magistracy adopting, or of public opinion enforcing, the doctrine which presumes the possible innocence of an untried prisoner. A judge of the High Court, who, at the period of the Seize Mai, had suffered for his Republican opinions, assured me that the new system was "bad for magistrates, bad for counsel, and bad for prisoner." After it came into force Colonel Picquart was arrested by order of the War Minister on the charge of forgery, and was kept untried in prison for many months, during two of which he was in solitary confinement—the law of 1897 not applying to military prisoners. The remarkable feature of the case was that there was no general indignation roused by this treatment of an untried prisoner. The partisans of M. Dreyfus, whom Colonel Picquart defended, regarded him as a martyr, while the anti-Dreyfusards thought he had his deserts; but there was no protest made on the abstract question of the liberty of a French citizen.

of his chamber are broken open ; the house would seem to have been ransacked by burglars in broad daylight. But he hears that the disarray has been caused not by enemies of the law, but by its emissaries. He is at a loss to account for the outrage. He is not an anarchist capable of secreting dynamite, nor a financier given to bribing members of Parliament and keeping their receipts, nor in any category of persons normally subject to domiciliary visitations of the police. But he has been denounced as a smoker of cigars imported without official permission ; and though the charge is untrue, the Government monopoly of tobacco is so important that the mere suspicion of an infringement of it calls for measures of a terror-striking nature. Lord Eldon is said to have remarked, in the days when Englishmen were put to death for minor offences against property, that if the capital penalty were relaxed no man's overcoat would be safe hanging up in his hall. In the same way, if Frenchmen did not know that the mere possession of contraband cigars subjected them to rigours appropriate for coiners or for bomb-makers, they might refuse to smoke the insipid State manufactures of Pantin and of Châteauroux.

The submission of the French nation, a century after the Revolution, to limitations on private liberty such as these, which modern democracies do not usually consider necessary for orderly government, may be referred to several causes. To begin with, the hardship affects only a small proportion of the community. The average Frenchman who accepts any existing regime, and who has no illusions about the philosophical doctrine of the Revolution, will say that all government rests on the surrender of a certain amount of personal liberty. In principle he may object to the way in which untried prisoners are treated, and to the wide powers given to the police of violating private domicile ; but as these abuses in most cases incommode only persons dangerous to society, he does not deem it worth while to agitate for reform. As we have seen, the sole occasion in French history when there was a great popular movement rousing the whole nation was the Revolution, of which the immediate cause

was the bad fiscal system oppressive to every one excepting the privileged. Then again there is no public opinion in France as we understand it in England, or at all events, no means of expressing it. The spirit of the press of the whole country, excepting in matters of local interest, is regulated by the journalists of Paris. They interpret merely the sentiments, sometimes conflicting, sometimes unanimous, of the Boulevards, and the newspaper is not used by the public for airing its grievances by means of letters to the editor. Moreover, the Legislature, as we shall see, though called a Parliament, is not utilised as a parliamentary people would make use of it for quietly redressing the grievances of the day. Questions and deputations to ministers, petitions to the two Houses, pledges demanded of members, and, in fine, all methods of constitutional agitation, are unknown in France. This is the corollary of the national tendency which survives all regimes. Louis Napoleon may take down the inscription of Liberty and the Third Republic may put it up again, but all the time the French people like to be governed: in the intervals of their revolutions they prefer to be driven, not with a loose rein, but feeling the hand of authority directing them. In a democracy which voluntarily confers on the State such arbitrary powers to encroach on its personal liberty, a special signification must be attached to that word.

II

There is another aspect of the subject of Liberty in France which calls for separate consideration. A century after the Declaration of the Rights of Man proclaimed the free exercise of opinion, so much intolerance lingers in the land that it has been said that a Frenchman's conception of Liberty is liberty for ideas in accordance with his own. Intolerance is a vice not peculiar to France. It has disfigured the annals of all civilised peoples, notably in connection with controversies kindled by the exercise of the Christian religion, the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin races having practised it with unedifying rivalry. I wish, there-

fore, in dealing with this question, to guard against the censorious attitude of a stranger pleading the superiority of his own nation. My design merely is to show that the French Revolution, for all its boasted doctrine of emancipation of the human race, has perhaps been the cause of France enjoying less liberty than other countries where its principle has not been enunciated as an abstract formula at seasons of insurrection.

One way in which the great Revolution conduced to the acuter phases of intolerance surviving longer in France than in England, was in its destruction of sectarian subdivision. For this cause the polemical forces of the nation have ever since been arrayed against one another in two definite and irreconcilable camps. On the eve of Voltaire's birth Calvinists were persecuted by Catholics, Jesuits fought with Jansenists, and Gallicans resisted Ultramontanes. At his death the conflict between the pretensions of the Church and the doctrine of free inquiry had grown so keen that little place was left for minor controversies, and the great upheaval had become inevitable. The Revolution came, rooting up society from its foundations; and when the disturbed elements settled down again, the two conflicting influences came forth in clearly defined mutual oppugnancy. The persecutions of the clergy in the struggle, and the confiscation of their possessions, added a new article to the Catholic faith,—that of hostility to the principles of the Revolution, which henceforth were professed by the bulk of the nation, though variously interpreted. The Concordat consolidated the Church without reconciling it to the new order of things. Subsequently, through all the regimes which have succeeded one another, outside the strife of party and of dynasty, though sometimes associated with their fortunes, the French nation has contained two great discordant sections, representing the civil and the ecclesiastical power. Their antagonism for one another has not been softened or diverted by the rivalries of manifold sects, for the Protestant minority has existed only in scattered localities.

The political conflict between the two forces in the early

years of the Third Republic will be mentioned later. All that need be said of it here is that the clerical party was the first aggressor. Not taking to heart the admonition of the Founder of the Church, "omnes enim qui acceperint gladium, gladio peribunt," it impetuously drew the sword and provoked a merciless reprisal. The spirit of the clergy after the War, outside the field of politics, was displayed by Mgr. Dupanloup, who, though he asserted his own liberty of opinion before the Pope himself, did not extend the same freedom to his countrymen more undisciplined than he. So when in spite of his opposition, Littré was elected to the French Academy in 1871, the Bishop of Orleans gathered his purple robes around him lest the great philologist, who was also a positivist, should touch their hem, and withdrew from the learned company in which four cardinals and four other prelates of the Church in its days of power had sat side by side with Voltaire.¹

In contrast with the attitude of this Gallican dignitary to a heterodox Frenchman of eminence may be noted the cordial feeling which Cardinal Manning cherished for Mr. Matthew Arnold. It is even probable that in a secular society, such as is the French Academy, he would have preferred as a colleague the author of *Literature and Dogma* to his episcopal opponent of the Vatican Council. Manning, the unbending churchman approved at Rome, could maintain friendly relations with a persuasive doubter. Dupanloup, whose own creed was held insufficient to entitle him to a scarlet hat, wished, on theological grounds, to keep a lexicographer out of a company engaged in dictionary making. This seems to be an example of the promotion of tolerance in England by the multiformity of sects and creeds. If Cardinal Manning had been the head of the one religion prominent in the realm, of which the only serious rivals were irreligion or indifference, his social and worldly relations would have been restricted. The old Oxford man could cultivate

¹ Cardinals A. G. de Rohan, de Rohan-Soubise, de Luynes, and de Bernis; Archbishop de Boisgelin; Bishops Boyer, Surian, and de Roquetaure. All these ecclesiastics were not simultaneously of the Académie Française; but Voltaire was a member from 1747 to 1778, so saw several generations of Immortals.

sympathetic intimacy with younger members of his University without reference to their faith. But if Renan, whose opinions resembled those of Arnold, and whose abjuration had not been more extensive than that of Manning in the opposite direction, had, from love of his old college, frequented the society of Sulpicians, loud would have been the scandal in France.

The idea that the population of both sexes is roughly divided into two great sections, consisting of those who more or less implicitly bow to the authority of the Church, and of those who more or less consistently hold that thought is free, encourages the teachers of the first category not only in exclusiveness, but also in the tradition of Rome which would circumscribe the sources of human knowledge available for mankind. Of all the works ever proscribed by the wisdom of the Congregation of the Index there are none which the French clergy more heartily ban than those of Voltaire. His name in their sermons has come to represent the principle of infidelity, like the "Jews and Turks" in the English Liturgy. The position in French estimation of Voltaire is about as much affected by the declamations of the priesthood as the conversion of the Hebrew community in England is quickened, or the Eastern question modified, by the prayers of our Established Church. The obloquy poured upon him is too indiscriminate; and there are multitudes of French people, especially in the rural districts, who would never hear his name but for the vague sound of it from the pulpit after the Gospel on Sunday mornings. An excellent Savoyard priest, whom I knew, used to exhort his flock "to burn the works of Voltaire and of Rousseau in their libraries." Among the toil-worn rustics whom he addressed, the richest in printed possessions rarely had even a cheap newspaper to read. But the simple-minded Curé, a peasant himself, cherished the admonitions he had heard at the seminary across the lake at Annecy, the city of Madame de Warens as well as of Sainte Chantal; so there were local reasons for including the scandalous Jean-Jacques in the maledictions usually reserved in other dioceses for the philosopher of Ferney.

Although the spiritual declensions of these villagers were not due to their literary temptations, in the next parish there was a house containing a library, of which the good Abbé did not know. In it M. Taine had written of Voltaire's works, "It includes the entire scope of human knowledge, and I know not what idea of importance would be wanting in a man who had for his breviary the Dialogues, the Dictionary, and the Romances."¹ Few of his contemporaries had as vast a stock of learning as Taine, so the testimonial is of value. Voltaire, in spite of his inaccuracies, his prejudices, and his false canons of criticism, the more he is studied the more he amazes with the force of his genius. Ideas without number, which later generations regard as novel or audacious, he has anticipated. Mr. Huxley related that he had a friend who was one of the most original thinkers in the world; but he never emitted an original thought, as, never having read anything, he was unaware that others had come to identical conclusions. The study of Voltaire gives the impression that there are many of our modern teachers in the same case, as far as he is concerned. If we take the one small section of his work which has specially brought him under the ban of the Church, that in which he deals with revealed religion, we find his judgments constantly reproduced in our day as novelties. If an Anglican clergyman, in essaying the reconciliation of science with revelation, throws overboard a Mosaic narrative or a Messianic prophecy; if a Presbyterian minister, for similar recusancy, incurs pursuit for heresy, the arguments or inferences of each have a familiar sound to those who have studied Voltaire. This is no reflection on the learning or the good faith of such seekers after truth, for German criticism, which undermines the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture by the mechanism of Oriental erudition, not at the disposal of Voltaire, arrives at the same results; while at the other end of the intellectual scale the questions of the Kaffir catechumen which perplexed Dr. Colenso, who was first an arithmetician and then a bishop, are to be found in Voltaire's *Philosophie*.

¹ *Ancien Régime*, livre iv. c. i. 4.

The beautiful landscape amid which Taine wrote his eulogy of Voltaire teems with associations exhorting Frenchmen to tolerance. Savoy was in language and in sentiment a part of France when politically distinct, and its residents, both natives and settlers, have for centuries given lustre to French literature and eloquence. Above the pleasant home of M. Taine, by the Lake of Annecy, stands the Château of Menthon, whence in the dim Middle Ages, St. Bernard went to found the Alpine sanctuaries which bear his name. The family of the saint still inhabits the castle, and thither every year came Mgr. Dupanloup to recruit his pious vigour in the hill country of his birth. The lattice of his chamber looks on one of the fairest prospects in Europe. In the foreground is a knoll by the water-side, where lies buried the philosopher whom the Bishop would have kept out of the French Academy had he lived and had his way. At the end of the lake rise the old battlements of the city where repose the remains of a Savoyard prelate more illustrious than the eminent Gallican. To Annecy, a century after St. François de Sales had been laid to rest in the convent of the Visitation, came Jean-Jacques Rousseau from Geneva, which lies beneath the low ridge of the Jura, visible on the horizon, marking also the spot where Voltaire retired for the last twenty years of his life to exercise his sway over the generation about to see the French Revolution.

No doubt there are earnest people who for different reasons would consider that the existence of each of these men was a misfortune for the French race. Ardent Protestants might deplore the conversion of the Chablais by St. François from the Reformed faith. Protestants might join with Catholics in deprecating Voltaire's onslaughts on their common Christianity. Lovers of orderly progress might regret the sentimental abstractions of Rousseau which aided the anarchy of the Revolution. Ultramontanes, as well as free-thinkers, might object to the teachings of the masterful Bishop of Orleans. Champions of the Revolution might, equally with the orthodox, lament the destruction of their idols by Taine. But the greatness of France has sprung from the diversity of intellect which has formed and

illustrated the French language. Perfect tolerance is an impossible ideal, as it implies the disappearance of human pride and passion. Yet even in France, where the course of history has been unfavourable even to its approximate attainment, its beauties are recognised if not practised. On the façade of the most successful of modern public schools in Paris, the Lycée, erected by the munificence of M. Janson de Sailly, in the agreeable quarter which lies between the Champs Élysées and the Bois de Boulogne, the bust of Bossuet is seen side by side with that of Voltaire, while Fénelon's is flanked by the effigies of Rousseau and of Molière, both of whom were banned by the Church of the Archbishop of Cambrai.

Voltaire, though he rallied the British nation on the number of its sects, saw that this was of greater advantage to the cause of tolerance than the tendency, then developing in France, to range the community into two camps.¹ Since his time religious persuasions have multiplied in our midst, within as well as without the Established Church; and could he have looked into the future he would have observed a phenomenon which even he could not have anticipated. He would have seen that the diversity of creeds in England has been much more productive of tolerance than has been in France the great Revolution of which he saw the approach. He would have seen that while the celebration by his countrymen of the centenary of his death was denounced by Mgr. Dupanloup as a declaration of war on Christianity, Cardinal Guibert ordaining a ceremony at Notre Dame de Paris to expiate the impious fête, the Church of England—no longer the Erastian institution which he had known in Bolingbroke's days, but an active agency of positive doctrine—extended its charity to conspicuous exponents of Voltairian philosophy. Mr. Arnold's criticism of the Book of Isaiah, Mr. Tyndall's suggestion for a test of the efficacy of prayer, and Mr. Huxley's reflections on the Gadarene swine, are

¹ "Je crois que depuis notre révolution l'Angleterre est le pays où le christianisme fait le moins de mal. La raison en est que ce torrent est divisé chez nous en dix ou douze ruisseaux, soit presbytériens soit autres dissidents."—*Lettre de Milord Cornsburi à Milord Bolingbroke* (1736).

all pure Voltaire, in conclusion if not in style or in spirit. Yet instead of being refused Christian burial, as their precursor was by the Curé of St. Sulpice, those eminent men were in their death accorded the same rites that the Church of England bestows on its strictest sons.¹

The posthumous treatment of Renan and of Matthew Arnold in their respective countries was peculiarly striking. The *Comment on Christmas* is a piece of criticism as destructive of orthodox Christian belief as anything ever written by the historian of Israel. The only difference was that Arnold addressed a select circle of cultured people, while Renan was a philosopher of wider celebrity and influence. In England Arnold was quietly laid to rest in a peaceful country graveyard, and the comforting office of the national Church was read over the remains of the gentle apostle of doubt, without any Englishman daring or wishing to say that the sacred rite was inappropriate from any point of view. But Renan's funeral was a pompous anti-religious spectacle. The courtyard of the Collège de France was decked as a Temple of Reason, from which the body was borne amid red wreaths, like those which survivors of the Commune place on the wall at Père la Chaise where their comrades were shot. Renan would not have minded the maledictions with which the clerical press saluted his death; but that he, a fastidious aristocrat by instinct, should have had his funeral car decked with Revolutionary garlands, and acclaimed by the rabble, would have sorely vexed his soul. It was a retribution for an attitude which he sometimes assumed in his lifetime. As his old friend Jules Simon said, "I forgave him for being a doubter, but I could not forgive him for rejoicing in his doubts." Far different was the demeanour of Taine, whose scepticism was not exuberant. Years before the unseemly scene at the obsequies of Renan, which he

¹ Of course it may be urged that the Church of England is so broad that not only may every English layman claim its membership irrespective of dogmatic belief, but even in its day of Catholic revival exponents of free-thought are found among the most esteemed of its clergy. I have the best reason for knowing that M. Renan brought away from his personal intercourse with Mr. Jowett the impression that their attitude to revealed religion was practically identical.

lived to deplore, he had directed that he should be buried according to the Protestant rite. For civil interment in France is used as a political demonstration.

III

It is a notable contrast that in England, amid bitter feud on the subject of funeral rites, universal sentiment is so opposed to burial without prayers that it is considered an indignity, reducing man to the level of the lower animals, which even a suicide should be spared. Whereas in France, though civil obsequies are equally repugnant to mourners, and rare outside the great towns, they are sometimes, in the case of ministers of the Republic and of other prominent persons, flaunted before the public,—as though to deprive weeping women and children of hope and consolation were an act of civic virtue.¹ On such occasions is displayed the sectarian spirit animating the exponents of free-thought. The French term *libre pensée* more plainly indicates its presumed connection with Liberty; yet in France its cult has produced the most curious phase of intolerance manifested under the Third Republic. Anti-clericalism may be a useful remedy to moderate the pretensions of the sacerdotal caste in a nation where, since the decline of Gallicanism, ecclesiastics regard themselves sometimes as the mandatories of a foreign potentate. But free-thinkers contravene the basis of their own profession in erecting anti-clericalism into a dogma, not only to be paraded on occasions like that of a public civil funeral, but even to be imposed on others as a test of citizenship. The unhappy period when the name of Ferry was associated with outrages offered to religious communities or to sacred emblems, was marked by the incidents of a war of religion, of which the

¹ In the provinces the feeling against civil interment is strong, and even in the case of anti-clerical leaders it is rare that their families permit their political colleagues to deprive them of sacred rites; though the mother or the widow is sometimes abused in the anti-clerical journals for insisting on a religious service. On the other hand, when the clericals for a short season got the upper hand, under the government of Seize Mai, they tried coercive measures against civil funerals, the Préfet at Lyons decreeing that they should only be tolerated before eight o'clock in the morning.

tradition has always been more cruel than that of merely secular strife. But while the clerical faction began the conflict, in their merciless retaliation M. Paul Bert and the anti-clericals revealed that their conception of liberty did not include the enjoyment of freedom by their adversaries. Every-day life in France at normal times unfortunately abounds in instances of the application of their doctrine.

The efforts of the exponents of free-thought to penalise religious observance afford a peculiar example. In England Dissenters and Catholics used to be punished for attending divine worship after their own rites. In France, from 1685 to the Revolution, Protestants were subject to similar treatment. But in neither case was Liberty invoked to palliate the coercive policy: in both countries it was frankly applied to enforce conformity to the creed of the State. The intolerant system under the Third Republic differs from all persecutions known to history, in that it is not only practised in the name of Liberty, but it aims at laying official disability on an established religion. Not that there is any vexatious legal restraint on the cult of the Roman Catholic faith analogous to the English Penal Laws or to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The clergy are free to provide public offices in the churches for every hour of the day and the night. Nevertheless a French citizen who is dependent on the State for his livelihood is not always at liberty to accompany his wife and his children to mass on Sunday morning, without risking his future prospects and their means of sustenance.

"No one has any idea what a noxious and insupportable creature is the anti-clerical in the provinces. Always eager to accuse others of fanaticism, he is the bitterest and most oppressive of fanatics himself. Under the mask of free-thought he would like to prevent his neighbours from thinking differently from himself, being violently and despotically narrow, for all his boasts of liberal-mindedness. If he were only a harmless fanatic it would not matter. But he is an aggressive persecutor; malignantly meddling in affairs which do not concern him;

attacking or denouncing honest folks, public functionaries and others, with whose conscience he has nothing to do ; threatening them on account of their opinions, which he calls 'subversive' because they do not agree with his. If he be a town councillor, or in any similar position, he uses all his influence to set up irreligion as a standard of citizenship."¹

The foregoing quotation is not from an organ of the sacristy. It is from the *Journal des Débats*, to which Renan and Taine were contributors as long as they lived ; and under the Third Republic it has had to recognise that the sectarian intolerance of the later Jacobins is a greater peril to liberty in France than the pretensions of the Church.

That picture was drawn in an eastern department. In the west the following incident came under my own notice. The postmaster of a town in the Vendée, who, as is usual in that region, observed his religious duties, was sent for by the sous-Préfet, who said to him : " It is reported that you are a constant attendant at church on Sunday ; more than that, you always take a book with you ; and a man who follows the service with a book must not be surprised if he is put down as a clerical. Besides, there are your daughters ; the eldest, who is being educated at the convent, sings in the chapel choir, and her sister makes the collection at the parish church. Now all these facts are noted against you here in your *dossier*, and I think it fair to warn you that you are getting the reputation of being a clerical."² The postmaster consulted the Curé, who is a rare

¹ *Journal des Débats*, November 17, 1893. The *Débats* and the *Temps* (which, if it has any religious bias, is disposed to favour liberal Protestantism) are the only two journals which I have consulted to supplement my personal observations of anti-clerical intolerance, as their impartiality is unimpeachable. The testimony of clerical and reactionary organs should not be accepted uncorroborated on the subject, any more than that of the Radical and anti-clerical press on the misdeeds of the clergy ; but the journals of the Extreme Left, especially in the provinces, often reveal with great candour the proceedings of their party in their strife with the Church.

² *Dossier* is the name given to the confidential collection of documents relating to every functionary of the State, which his chiefs consult when there is question of his promotion or dismissal. Each bishop has his *dossier* carefully annotated at the Ministry of Public Worship, each magistrate at the Ministry of Justice, while the reports relating to the great army of minor officials in the

example among the French parochial clergy of an accomplished man of the world, and he said, "You have your wife and children to think about, so you ought not to sacrifice your chances of promotion for trifles not essential. Leave your prayer-book at home if it offends the anti-clericals; tell the good Sisters not to let your daughter sing in the convent choir; and I will find another of our young friends to take the place of your second girl in making the collection here on Sunday." The venerable rector's advice was sagacious. Nevertheless in a land where such sagacity is needful it is clear that the term Liberty has a peculiar and special meaning. The sous-Préfet in this case was an official of mild and considerate demeanour, who seemed incapable of tyranny. His warning of the postmaster was probably an act of kindness; for in the Vendée, a Royalist as well as a Catholic stronghold, an agent of the Government would have strict orders from the Ministry of the Interior to flatter the zeal of the anti-clerical party.

The form which persecution takes in different countries, like that of all other human action, is necessarily affected by the interior economy and the institutions of each community. In England instances of tyranny may be found practised on the one hand by members of the rural clergy, and on the other by trade-unions in industrial districts. The reason is that the ancient organisation of the parish and the modern organisation of the trade-guild have put facilities for oppression at the disposal of men of domineering temper, who are found in all nations and in all classes of life. But the foregoing incident could have no counterpart amongst us, because pressure of the kind described can only in a highly centralised State be brought to bear upon public functionaries. In France they form a numerous body ready to be organised for political purposes apart from their official duties. The system was constructed to work as an essential portion of the machinery of autocratic government. But under parliamentary institutions and unstable

provinces are kept and revised at the préfectures and sous-préfectures of the departments. See p. 359.

ministries the direction of the centralised machine has, as we shall see, passed out of the hands of ephemeral ministers into those of local committees, self-constituted and irresponsible, which often exercise a sinister despotism in provincial neighbourhoods. Thus the functionaries who under illiberal regimes have been coldly looked upon for neglecting religious observances are, under the liberal dispensation of the Republic, denounced as enemies of the Government if they go to church.

The liberty which the anti-clerical sectaries withhold from public officials they do not willingly extend to private individuals who wish to stand well with the party in power. In a part of Touraine associated less with the religious strife of the Renaissance in that region than with the earlier tradition of Joan of Arc, whom clericals and anti-clericals equally extol, near the road between Azay-le-Rideau and Chinon, is the small village of Villaines. The smiling landscape through which the Maid passed on her miraculous mission to Charles VII. does not seem to have retained her mystical spirit, for there "A Group of Republicans" felt moved to denounce in a journal of Tours the following scandal:—"In our commune," they said, "the Curé, wishing to make his services more attractive, has been looking out for singers. With our good pastor's efforts to increase his income we have nothing to do; but what does astonish us is to see in the choir two sons of an old democrat hitherto a staunch liberal and anti-clerical. Is it possible that a soldier of the Republican army has failed to bring up his children in sound principles, or has he let them be perverted by the Curé to abandon 'Marianne' for the Blessed Virgin? In either case he would do well to give us a plain answer, in order to allay the malevolent suspicions which he has aroused in the hearts of his friends."¹

Similar instances might be quoted from every department; and unhappily it is often too true that the tyranny of free-thought

¹ *L'Éclairneur: organe de la démocratie socialiste de l'Ouest*, 5 Mai 1895. With this may be compared the proceedings of the "Possibiliste-Broussiste" group of the Socialists in a quarter of Paris who rejected the candidature of one of their number for the Municipal Council because it was ascertained he had been married in a church (*Temps*, 23 Dec. 1892).

is retaliation for acts of clerical intolerance in the past. But the free-thinking sectarians are not content with attacking the pretensions of Rome, or even of Christianity. The public expression of any religious belief excites their arrogant wrath. Thus at Dôle in the Jura it is the custom each winter to commemorate the inhabitants who died in 1870 defending their homes against the Prussians. One year the mayor issued a placard inviting the population to take part in the usual ceremony, in which he said, "our pious souvenirs will go beyond the tomb to show our fellow-townsmen that we do not forget them." In that land of the Sequani once ruled by Marcus Aurelius, there are cinerary relics of the Roman occupation before the introduction of Christianity, on which is inscribed a more definite evocation of the dead. But the freemasons of the town-council saw in the language of the mayor a clerical manoeuvre to give official sanction to "the deplorable superstition of a life beyond the tomb," and an expurgated placard was pasted over the other.

As there are few of the French who do not practise the pathetic cult of the dead, an incident like this displays a peculiar feature of the tyranny of free-thought. In every other religious persecution in France, from the martyrdoms of Lyons and Vienne in the second century to the dragonnades of the Protestants under Louis XIV., the oppressed have been a feeble minority; but under the Third Republic it is the minority which imposes its narrow policy on the majority. In the whole population there is not one person in a hundred who is an anti-religious bigot; and even among the men of France who form the electorate, the sectaries of free-thought are a small minority, smaller than the clerical party of the other extreme. The great majority of Frenchmen are tolerant or indifferent. They resent ecclesiastical interference, but they have no active sympathy with the zealots of anti-clericalism. But the latter in their masonic lodges, which in France are not mere convivial or charitable sodalities, and in their local committees, are effectively organised, and are thus a potent influence in the government of the country. When we examine the Parliamentary System, we

shall see that one sign of its unsuitability to the French temperament is that it invests with undue power a minority composed of the least worthy elements of the nation,—this being a worse evil and more subversive of liberty than the regular delegation of authority to an autocratic Government. Here we have to observe the constraint laid by the minority on the representatives of the whole nation.

About the tradition imposed on the President of the Republic never to pronounce the name of God in any public utterance, for fear of offending the free-thinkers, I will say nothing, as the subject is somewhat delicate. The contrary practice of all other civilised rulers, from the Emperor of Russia to the President of the United States, is not permitted in France. The sacred name is regarded by the anti-clericals as such a symbol of superstition that a school edition of La Fontaine, who passed for a Liberal in his day, was by them expurgated of all reference to the Deity, in order not to mislead the young with ideas too fabulous even to be tolerated in fable.¹ M. Félix Faure would be the last to give his voluntary approval to such sectarian vagaries, for he seems to be a large-minded representative of the tolerant majority of the French nation. Yet like every other functionary of the Republic, he submits to the terrorism of the anti-clericals. Otherwise it would not be explicable why the Chief of the State, who under the Concordat has to preside at semi-ecclesiastical ceremonies—such as the investiture of French cardinals with the scarlet hat,—should avoid official appearance in churches, as though they were

¹ Among the emendations made in the edition of La Fontaine for the use of schools, drawn up by the direction of the Municipal Council of Paris, was in the opening of the well-known fable which begins :

Petit poisson deviendra grand
Pourvu que Dieu lui prête vie.

In it the second line was made to read "Pourvu que l'on lui prête vie." The story was revived by the *Temps* in calling attention to a similar proceeding of the Council-Général of the Sarthe, at its meeting in August 1896, when on the motion of M. Leporché, a Radical Senator, a vote of censure was passed on the inspector of primary schools at Le Mans for setting questions in an examination "which implied the existence of a God." It should be said that the population of the Sarthe is decidedly Catholic, a large minority being actively clerical in tendency.

places of ill repute.¹ He goes to Reims to inaugurate a statue of Joan of Arc: but though the only association of the Maid with that city is in the cathedral where she brought Charles VII. to be crowned, the President dares not set foot in it, and delays his arrival till the festival service is over within the glorious walls. He makes an official tour in Brittany where, Republican or Royalist, every man is an ardent Catholic: yet though spending a Sunday in the cathedral town of Quimper, and welcomed at the Préfecture by the Bishop, he may not gratify the pious population of Cornouailles by attending service in the shrine of St. Corentin for fear of the criticisms of the anti-clerical press in Paris.

President Faure did on one occasion make an official visit to a church. When the Tsar of Russia came to Paris, the young autocrat profited from the curious deference paid him by the French nation to read the Republican Government a lesson in religious decorum. Though not a member of the Roman communion, he expressed his desire to pay his respects to the religion professed by the majority of the people whose guest he was. Thus the President of the Republic went officially to the metropolitan cathedral of Notre Dame, not as the chosen chief of many millions of Catholics, but as the polite attendant of a foreign potentate. The Tzar plainly intimated to the French Government that only as a Christian prince did he accept its homage; and his first public act in France was to proceed with pomp to a solemn service in the Russian Church, though he had not found that ceremony necessary when visiting Great Britain or Germany. One of the most singular results of the Franco-Russian alliance was that, in its desire to please its august ally, the Republican Government, which officially ignored religious solemnities celebrated by Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, displayed a sudden cult for the offices of the Orthodox rite. On every birthday or other festival of the Imperial family of

¹ The anti-clericals in the Chamber having blamed M. Faure's presence at Notre Dame at the obsequies of victims of the fire in the rue Jean-Goujon, to which all the powers of Europe sent their envoys, the Ministry declared that the ceremony was not official. Ch. des Députés: Séance du 25 juin 1897.

Romanoff, the high officials of the French Republic with such assiduity trooped to prayers in the Russian church of the rue Daru, that an ingenuous stranger might have thought that it was not Christianity which the French anti-clericals disliked, but only the *filioque* clause of the Western creed.

The view adopted in these pages of this peculiar phase of liberty which widely prevails under the Third Republic is that of the majority of the French nation. In its exposition no effort has been made to disguise the intolerant tendencies of the clericals; but the restraints which they would lay on human action are not imposed in the name of Liberty, as are the restrictions enforced by the zealots of free-thought, so they are less to be dreaded in the modern democratic State. Moreover, if tyranny has to be endured by a citizen at the end of the nineteenth century, the domination of the Church would seem a less evil than that of the anti-clericals. Both are highly undesirable: but if the choice of ills had to be made, it might be better to submit to those who profess a lofty ideal and a severe moral code, than to undisciplined masters who have neither the one nor the other. The municipal councillor who drives the sisters of mercy from the hospitals, and deprives the village of the processions which used to delight his own children at the Fête Dieu or the Assumption, will reply with magniloquent gesture that the choice lies between him, the son of Voltaire, and the successors of those denounced by Voltaire for their share in the torturing of Jean Calas and of the Chevalier de la Barre in the name of religion.¹ Now, next to a well-beneficed abbé of the Old Regime it is hard to conceive a type less pleasing to Voltaire, authoritative and fastidious, fresh from the Court of Potsdam, or holding his own levees of princes at Ferney, than a Radical politician of the Third Republic. Yet, even if the

¹ Jean Calas was a Protestant of Toulouse broken on the wheel in 1763 on the false charge of having murdered his son for becoming a Catholic, the youth having in reality committed suicide. The Chevalier de la Barre was a boy of nineteen, executed at Abbeville in 1766, after having his tongue cut out, on the charge of having mutilated a wooden cross on the highway. Voltaire's pamphlets on these judicial crimes are included in his volumes of "Politique et Législation."

hatred of such an one for religion should justify his title of Voltairian, the circumstances are not quite the same as when the civil judges and officials of the French Monarchy pronounced and carried out iniquitous sentences on persons deemed to be hostile to the Catholic Church.

We are all familiar with the theme of the unchanging inclemency of the yoke of Rome, or with a wider version which associates the whole history of Christianity with the oppression of man by man. We may recognise that in all lands theological profession, or even opinion, has no necessary relation with moral conduct, and that in France the section of society most conspicuous in the ranks of Catholic laity is not pre-eminent in the nation for its ethical qualities. But when we descend from general proposition to particular instance, if we go to a French provincial centre under the Third Republic, we find there that the extreme exponents of Christianity are worthier specimens of humanity and less inimical to liberty than are the extreme representatives of free-thought.

In the society of a small provincial town, at one end is the Curé, usually a peasant by origin, with no other experience of the world than that gained in the limited horizons of his native village, of the diocesan seminary, and of his parish. But though his intellectual development be imperfect he has compensating qualities. His morals are pure ; his rectitude is as notable as his homely shrewdness and good sense ; simple-minded, unambitious, and self-denying, he often shares his meagre pittance with his poorer neighbours. Some, indeed, there are whose defects of character far outweigh their virtues, while others in nobility of life approach the level of human perfection ; but the average parish priest generally corresponds to the foregoing description.

At the other extremity are the leaders of free-thought : the doctor who dreams that the town-council may perhaps be his stepping-stone to the Chamber of Deputies ; the journalist who hopes that the violence of his pen may take him to the provincial capital, or even to Paris. Their virtues are theoretical. In the name of Liberty they would emancipate the human spirit

from superstition. The local application of the principle involves the removal of the crucifix from the cemetery or the school-room, and the prohibition of religious processions in the streets. The café is the meeting-place of these guardians of liberty, and it is there that the denunciation is concerted of the petty official who has been seen at church, or who has let his children take part in a service. Formerly the charge of church-going was equivalent to one of hostility to the Republic, though even when clericalism was really its enemy the population in some of the most Republican provinces of France was most assiduous in religious observance.¹ But since the Pope enjoined an active adherence to the existing regime on the clergy, who, for the most part, are democratic by instinct as well as by origin, the insinuation that a man who attends public worship is disloyal to the Government has to be more subtly suggested. The Church is the negation of the Revolution; the Republic is the only legitimate offspring of the Revolution; therefore adherence to the Catholic religion, even in most perfunctory form, in spite of nominal loyalty to the Republic, marks an unsound citizen who ought to receive no favour from the Government.

Sometimes it is seriously suggested that the tyrannical ideas which are thus made irregularly to regulate the lives of many French people shall be erected into laws. Such was the plan of M. Pochon, deputy for the Ain, who proposed that no Frenchman should be eligible for any public employment unless he had been educated in a Government school.² This project had

¹ At the elections of 1881, which to a great extent were fought on Gambetta's party cry of "clericalism the enemy," among the departments in which not a single vote was given to the adversaries of the Republic was the Haute Savoie, where nearly all the male population goes to Mass.

² Ministers of the Republic have essayed to carry out this intolerant policy. In the Chamber, on November 5, 1892, the case was discussed of four youths in the department of the Pas de Calais, who had been disqualified from an open competition for clerkships in the "Ponts et Chaussées" on the ground that they had been educated by the Christian Brothers instead of at the Communal School. The Minister of Public Works (M. Viette) admitted the truth of the story, but said that the real reason why the boys had not been allowed to compete was because their fathers were active members of the clerical party. The *Temps* the following day, in the name of Liberalism, took the Ministry severely to task for its action in the matter.

nothing but its tyranny to recommend it, even in the interest of the party of irreligion, as, possibly because Frenchmen look back without pleasure to their school-days, many politicians hostile to the Church have been educated by the priests, while well-known clericals were pupils of the Lycées. Even in the Senate, where respect for liberty more generally prevails, a former Minister of Education,¹ utilising private reports procured during his term of office, proposed to force all persons in Government employment, under pain of dismissal, to send their children to Government schools. In many of the large towns of France the best secondary education is imparted in the Lycées: in certain other localities the schools conducted by religious Orders are better. In either case it is an outrageous theory that a General or a Judge, by reason of his services to the State, should be deprived of his domestic liberties. It is not surprising, when voices of authority are heard enunciating such doctrine in the calm air of the Senate, that petty local tyrants should venture to apply their version of it to the cases of the minor functionaries under their influence.

When from the benches of the Extreme Left in the Legislature coercive measures such as these are proposed, their supporters cite the similar policy of the Second Empire to justify their demands. A Radical will retort to a Moderate Republican who advocates perfect liberty, "Do you think the Second Empire would have allowed its officers or its magistrates to send their children to schools where anti-Imperial ideas were taught?" The Second Empire would probably have acted as the Radicals would wish the Third Republic to act, but with less inconsistency. The Imperial autocracy had no abstract leanings in favour of clericalism or of anti-clericalism. When it was thought expedient to conciliate the clergy, a promising young professor like Taine was sacrificed at the outset of his career, or Renan in his maturity was treated with rigour. But when the pretensions of the Church became excessive they were resisted on behalf of the Imperial

¹ M. Combes, Senator of the Charente Inférieure and a Doctor of Medicine, Minister of Public Instruction from November 1895 to April 1896.

Government by Victor Duruy, the most enlightened Minister of Education that France has had in the last half of the century, with the exception, perhaps, of Jules Simon. The tortuous ecclesiastical policy of the Second Empire is not a model to be followed; but whatever its faults, it was not in the name of Liberty that it ordained oppression.

Archbishop Ireland once, after hearing some of the grievances of his brethren of the French clergy, told them that he recognised the justice of their complaints, but that looking at past history, he believed that if they had the upper hand they would be as intolerant as their irreligious oppressors. That prelate of the New World whose Christian charity is so strong that high ecclesiastical rank has failed to impair his love of liberty, knew France well, having been educated at the Seminary of Belley. He seemed to indicate that the French, irrespective of party or creed, were generally incapable of understanding liberty and toleration in the highest sense; but that opinion needs some qualification. France contains a certain number of citizens who are patterns of philosophic tolerance such as no other land produces; but they are now too few even to form a group in the legislative assemblies. Some of them, indeed, survive on the benches of the Senate, and in the classes of the Institute they are relatively numerous. They retain the liveliest illusions on the perfection of the British Constitution, and since the State has bought the portrait by Ingres of Bertin, the creator of the *Journal des Débats*, the Louvre ought to be their place of pious pilgrimage,—for that masterpiece is the type in portraiture of the Liberal bourgeoisie which might have governed France for a century instead of for one short intermediate epoch, if 1789 had not been followed by 1793, and the Empire had not come forth from the Terror. This select band is far from containing all the tolerance and love of liberty to be found in France. But the attachment to the principles of liberty and toleration of the vast majority of the population is of such a nature that they decline to interfere actively in any matters not of personal concern.

In these pages we shall see how important a factor in the life of the nation is the political indifference which prevails. The electors who refrain from recording their votes at the polls are numerous, but they do not include all the indifferent. If the industrious mass of the population seems supine in matters of public interest, whether national or local, except when they appeal to the individual, it must be borne in mind that the experience of a century has made the peaceable citizens of France sceptical as to the utility of interference in politics. Moreover, the excessive restrictions laid on liberty in France, whether enforced by Government or by irresponsible hands, do not lessen the happiness of a large proportion of the inhabitants. The hard-working tradesman or peasant, either in his laborious days or in his occasional hours of diversion, is, save in rare cases, not often harassed either by the rigours of the administration or by the tyranny of politicians who exercise undue influence under the parliamentary system.

Thus, as the old Liberal party is unhappily ineffective, and the toiling tranquil population is indifferent, two intolerant factions are exclusively conspicuous to the superficial view. There is the party of Reaction, of which the most durable and the best organised element is the clerical section; and there is the Jacobin party. It is likely enough that the former, if ever it became predominant, would, as the discerning American prelate said, lay grievous restraints on liberty. But as its efforts in that direction since the reign of Charles X. had no signal success when powerful lay influence was exerted on its behalf, either under the Second Empire or during the Presidency of Marshal MacMahon, there is no fear of it constituting a danger to a people long habituated to freedom from priestly domination. Indeed the Church and the Centralised Administration, both of which operate in France by means of the machinery devised by Napoleon, tend much less to interfere with personal liberty than does the action of that section of the population, which, hostile to those organisations, would in the name of Liberty subject the entire nation to its narrow doctrine. The Church with its

mystical and moral authority, and the administrative system with its ramified and deep-rooted stability, are two of the chief defences of a sober and industrious people against anarchy, which is incompatible with all liberty.

The extreme politicians who tyrannise in the provinces are generally associated with the party of disorder in Paris and in the populous centres, which has excessive weight with ministries and urges them to intolerant policy. Anti-clericalism is indeed often professed by authoritative opponents of anarchy. That, however, is not the usual tendency of the sectaries, who terrorise public servants of every degree,—from the humble functionary, deprived by them of his liberty to regulate the most sacred details of his domestic life, to the President of the Republic, who for fear of them must not be seen in a church. They are the descendants of the Jacobins who diverted the course of the Revolution to their own purposes. Though their aims and doctrines differ in some particulars, they have one point of resemblance,—they are only a handful of the population. M. Taine has elaborately proved that the Jacobin conquest of France, after 1789, was accomplished by a party which did not include in its ranks one-twentieth of the male adults left in France.¹ So a century later, after a generation of tranquillity, just as in the period succeeding the great upheaval, the majority of the French people have the same dread of anarchy which in 1799 drove them into surrendering some of the liberties recently won in order to escape the worst form of oppression. Hence it is not impossible that the curious conception which the Revolutionary minority has of liberty, coupled with the inability of parliamentary government to check its pretensions, might become a contributing force to impel the French nation to try a new experiment in government wherewith to inaugurate the new century.

¹ *Révolution*, vol. ii. livre 1. c. ii.

CHAPTER III

EQUALITY

I

THERE are without doubt many French people who would willingly see the principle of Liberty more liberally applied ; but this can hardly be said of the second great theory of the Revolution. It is, however, no reproach to the French that Equality is neither found nor cultivated among them ; for the contrary could only be the case if they ceased to belong to the human family. What is open to criticism is their official pretension that their nation is endowed with a quality which has never existed in any community of mankind. As at the end of the nineteenth century they repeat the legend adopted at the Revolution, the student is bound in courtesy to inquire into its signification, and to see if its perpetuation has a good or an evil effect in the land.

The first stage of the Revolution did appear to produce relative equality in the French nation. The abolition of privilege and the equalisation of all classes before the tax-gatherer and the tribunals was such a change from the oppression which had provoked the upheaval, that men excusably believed that an era of equality had arrived. But soon human passion asserted itself, and the accredited leaders of the movement, members of the long suppressed middle-class, revealed that their idea of Equality was equality with people who pretended to be of superior rank to them. As was said sixty years later by Tocqueville, than whom

none knew better the true results of the Revolution, the word Equality in the lips of a French politician signifies, "No one shall be in a better position than mine."¹ This was the sentiment of the Jacobins of the Terror. Camille Desmoulins, the same summer that he, a briefless barrister deeply in debt, had become a popular hero by his inflammatory harangues in the Palais Royal on the eve of the Fall of the Bastille, wrote privately of his improved position: "An additional pleasure is to put myself in my proper place, to display my power to those who despised me, to bring down to my level those whom fortune had set above me. My motto is that of all honest folks, 'no superior.'"² For four years he pursued his upward career, displaying his power by demanding the heads of his colleagues of the Convention. But at last the chief accuser of the Girondins found that he had to recognise a superior in Robespierre, who sent him vociferating to the scaffold, a few months before the autocrat of the Revolution himself became a victim to the device of the Republic, as it was sometimes written in 1794: "Liberty, Equality, or Death."

The season in which the guillotine did its levelling work is looked back upon with satisfaction by only a select few of the sons of the Revolution. The Revolutionary period which has been extolled by Frenchmen of every party, excepting extreme Legitimists, is that of the Constituent Assembly. Yet before it was a year old its acts took so little account of human nature that they were condemned from their inception. When at the famous night sitting of August 4th, 1789, the deputies of the clergy and of the nobility abandoned all their privileges, fiscal, feudal, and judicial, the only criticism which can be made of that great rectification of inequality is that it was too sudden. The baneful institutions were abolished without anything being ready to take their place, so anarchy and chaos were the result. But the reform was both well-conceived and essential,—qualities which were soon lacking in the acts of the Assembly. Just a

¹ *Alexis de Tocqueville et la démocratie libérale. Étude suivie de fragments des entretiens de Tocqueville avec N. W. Senior (1848-58)*, par E. d'Eichthal.

² September 20, 1789

year after it had, in the Tennis Court at Versailles,¹ solemnly sworn not to separate before giving a constitution to France, it paused on the way to suppress all nobiliary titles and honorific distinctions. It declared that henceforth, under pain of fine and deprivation of civic rights, no Frenchman should take or keep the title of duke, prince, marquis, count, baron, or similar style, or use under any circumstances any appellation but that of his family name.

A hundred years later, a generation grown up under a Republic, in which nobility has no place, and which claims to have inherited the complete doctrine of 1789 and 1790, reads in the newspapers any morning a list of names of the frequenters of a Parisian place of amusement, including more French subjects styled count or marquis than are to be found in a volume of St. Simon. At the same time the Republic itself allows the members of its Legislature, and even its salaried functionaries, to deck themselves with whatever title seems good to them. Moreover, though the First Empire and the Restoration lavishly disregarded the prohibition of the Constituent Assembly, Louis Philippe and Napoleon III. conferred only a limited number of hereditary titles. So, nearly seventy years after their creation practically ceased, in 1830, the result of the law of 1790 is that under a Republic nobiliary titles have multiplied in France to an extent which would have scandalised a king of the ancient Monarchy who was the sole fountain of honour.

No doubt the abolition of titles was the logical corollary of the abolition of privilege. To the theorists of 1790 it seemed unreasonable that men should be distinguished among their fellows by meaningless rank which only kept alive the memory of discarded abuses; but their conclusion proved their ignorance of human nature. The enthusiasm of some of the revolutionaries was as single-minded as it was chimerical; but the sentiment expressed by Camille Desmoulins inspired much of the action of that period. Had he kept his head on his shoulders another

¹ "Serment du Jeu de Paume," June 20, 1789. "Suppression de tous les titres et distinctions honorifiques," June 19, 1790.

four months, till Robespierre's had fallen, he might have attained the exalted rank enjoyed by guillotining levellers as ferocious as himself,—like Fouché, whose dukedom of the Empire was confirmed by Louis XVIII., the brother of his most illustrious victim. The impotence of the revolutionaries, after redressing grievous abuses, to establish the theory of the equality of mankind is revealed on every page of French history for a century. Here we may observe some of its contemporary manifestations, and they will incidentally allow us to glance at a section of the population which otherwise might be neglected in a work primarily concerned with the political forces of France.

The most superficial traveller may remark the curious fact that in England, which is an unmilitary monarchy, the importunates who infest the exits of London theatres deem that the surest way of winning custom is by addressing a person whose carriage they offer to call as "Captain." Whereas under the Republic, in warlike but egalitarian France, a member of that disinherited class addresses his possible client as "Monsieur le Comte," or, if unduly avaricious, as "Mon Prince." And just as the peaceful attorney rolls home to Bayswater in a hansom not displeased with the recognition of his martial air, so does the Republican deputy descend the Boulevard satisfied that his features bear a stamp of noble distinction superior to that of his colleagues in the Chamber. The conclusion is that an Englishman, though he deprecates conscription, and though his country has only once in living memory been at war with a civilised power, has a human weakness for fighting; and that a Frenchman, however sincere his official creed that titular honours have no place in the democratic State, has an equally human disbelief in the equality of rank.

Before glancing at the nobiliary titles used by an ever-increasing number of French citizens under the Republic, we ought to notice the legalised mode whereby the Government counteracts the principle of Equality advertised in its Revolutionary device. The Legion of Honour founded by Napoleon during the Consulate, and reorganised at various epochs, is the

object of much criticism in France; but it is an excellent institution of its kind. All the powers of Europe, excepting Switzerland, have found that government is facilitated by the faculty of distributing among their subjects honorary distinctions, titular or decorative; so the French system of one great national Order seems to offer the advantages of symmetry, which is a feature of the creations of the Napoleonic settlement. It is composed of five classes, and it cannot be compared with any method existing in our country for rewarding merit. The divisions of Grand Crosses and of Grand Officers are so essentially military in composition, that for French civilians they are more exclusive in point of number than any category of honours at the disposal of an English minister.¹ The intermediate Legionaries styled Commanders and Officers correspond in some degree to the British subjects who in expanding crowds receive baronetcies, knighthoods, or companionships. They include diplomatists, functionaries, men of letters and of science, judges, provincial mayors, railway officials, journalists, politicians, and tradesmen, in addition to the multitude of soldiers and sailors whose predominance in all ranks of the Order preserves its originally military character. All, however, must have passed a period of probation in the fifth class of Knights of the Legion of Honour, which is unlimited in numbers, and never has fewer than several thousand members; so it does not resemble any institution in our country.

If it be for the public good that a portion of a human community should be singled out for distinction by the Govern-

¹ In a recent roll of the Legion of Honour, out of 48 Grand Crosses held by French subjects, 7 only were held by civilians. Of 227 Grand Officers 49 were civilians; thus making a total of 56 civilians invested with the two highest distinctions at the disposal of the French Government. There are 63 ribbons of the Garter, the Thistle, and St. Patrick available for British subjects (though they are not bestowed on the ground of merit), to say nothing of the much more numerous Grand Crosses of our other five orders, which have more resemblance to the high ranks of the Legion of Honour. Moreover, nowadays there are always at least sixty peers of the first creation surviving in our country. But although the high promotions in the Legion of Honour are often conferred on men whose position would in England give them a claim to peerages, such as ambassadors, colonial governors, and men eminent in science, art, and letters, there is no sort of analogy between the distinctions.

ment under which it exists, the broad basis of the Legion of Honour seems to present certain advantages. It puts a widespread premium on good behaviour. Every citizen of France, in town and country, without overweening ambition, which often ruins the happiness of well-meaning persons, may regard the coveted red ribbon as a distinction not beyond his reach. Honours of all categories are in all countries often conferred on the undeserving and the impudent; and a grave objection made by French critics to the miscellaneous bestowal of the Order is that it is a military decoration, giving all its wearers the right to be saluted by soldiers, and to be buried with martial escorts. Consequently its occasional possession by blackmailing journalists and other miscreants brings indirect stigma on the gallant army of France. That is a domestic question which does not concern this inquiry. From the egalitarian point of view the disadvantage of the system is that it tends to make the French a nation of supplicants, each man soliciting to have confirmed his superiority over his neighbour. Twice annually, at the New Year, and on the day of the Fall of the Bastille, supreme festival of Equality, the new nominations and promotions are published, being the result of many months' importuning of ministers. So vast is the host of applicants that two other species of decorations have had to be developed or invented outside the national Order: the Academic Palms, a distinction divided into two classes, and dispensed by the departments of Education, Fine Arts, and Public Worship, and the ribbon of "Mérite Agricole" conferred by the Minister of Agriculture. Thus, whenever the President of the Republic visits officially a provincial town, he goes with the definite mission of displaying that equality is discountenanced by the State; for it is his practice to seize the occasion to distinguish local notables with invidious disparity. The worthiest in the eyes of the Government he invests with the Legion of Honour; while other inhabitants of mark he practically tells that they are of inferior condition, not good enough for the red ribbon, and only entitled to the modest violet of the Academy, or the rustic green of Agriculture.

Though the conferring of the national Order and of the departmental decorations is an official contradiction of the principle of equality, yet in one outward aspect the recipients of these distinctions remain on a level. From M. Pasteur, who wore the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, to the humble farmer who, for skilfully using his discoveries, has won the *Mérite Agricole*, none of the decorated have any style or title affixed to their names. Moreover the consorts of citizens so honoured are of rank as naked as the wife of an English archbishop. In our country it is said that if the correspondence of party whips and of ministers' secretaries were made public, it would reveal that the most ardent solicitations of titles are attributed to feminine ambition. An unpretending manufacturer will write that since a rival tradesman was knighted by the preceding Ministry, his wife has vowed that a baronetcy conferred on her husband will alone give her the precedence proper to her merits. Or a reluctant millionaire will demand a peerage on similar grounds, while declaring that personally he has a clinging love for the lowly rank in which he was born. The adviser of the Crown, though aware of the disingenuousness of the petition, will sometimes, in defiance of the most venerable tradition of antiquity, reward his unblushing supporter who pleads that he has hearkened unto the voice of his wife. That, generally speaking, the vanity of the male is more aggressive in these matters, is perhaps shown by the fact that in official France women are content with the spectacular joy of their masters' beribboned button-holes. Nevertheless, the pleasure derived by both sexes from being addressed by their fellow-creatures with titles implying superiority accounts for the curious phenomenon we are about to notice.

II

While the Legion of Honour, though opposed to the principle of Equality, is bestowed on the ground of desert, achievement, or service, nobiliary titles are every year assumed wholesale by French subjects without pretence of meritorious or useful actions,

and are in most cases conferred by their wearers. Apart from the theory that, none being recognised by the Republic, all titles of nobility borne by French citizens are irregular, there are a certain number in use in France as authentic, as regularly inherited, and as interesting in origin as any in Europe. But so multitudinous are the persons who assume noble affixes according to their fancy, that outside those of the chiefs of ducal houses, no Frenchman but a learned expert can judge whether a title held by one of his countrymen, whatever his social position, be his due heritage or an unwarranted assumption.

The confusion would be less if it were not that thousands of the transgressors are connected with noble families. The French nobility before the Revolution was based on an entirely different principle from ours. Nobility in England was a political institution composed of a limited number of persons, each of whom on his death handed on to his heir in line of primogeniture the legislative and other powers he had exercised, together with his titles. In France it was a numerous privileged caste enjoying no political power, but transmitting its fiscal and other privileges to all its male progeny, though its titles were usually settled to descend from eldest son to eldest son.

A striking difference between the nobility in the two countries was, that in England its progeny in the junior branches, to adopt a French expression, redescended into the bourgeoisie. In the most exclusive days of the British peerage, before Mr. Pitt began the democratising of the House of Lords, of which our generation has seen some startling developments, a great nobleman's grandsons, who in the eyes of the heralds of the continental courts were by their quarterings of unimpeachably gentle quality, were in their own country simple members of the Third Estate without rank; while a successful lawyer of lowliest parentage would, if elevated to the peerage, be the social superior of such scions of illustrious stock. Thus in England the expression "noble birth" has always been inaccurate, as no one could be nobly born in our country excepting the sole posthumous son of a peer. In other cases of succession the ennobling of the blood has taken

place only on the cessation of the breath of the previous holder of the peerage. At the present day it is a matter of no interest to anybody that all the sons of a duke, including even the eldest in his father's lifetime, should in legal and official documents be described as untitled commoners; but in the past that tradition has had a most important bearing on our national history. Without it an aristocratic caste would have been formed, causing the division of English society into horizontal layers, and preventing the development of the party system, which has been in the past the bulwark of our nation against the abuses of privilege, and a safeguard against revolutions resembling that of 1789.

In France, before the Revolution, all titled persons were noble, but only a portion of the nobility was titled. In some provinces few of the privileged nobles had titles; and all over the land the marquises, baronies, and other similar distinctions were in most cases settled strictly according to primogeniture. The younger sons transmitted the noble name and the fiscal privileges to their progeny, but usually without any nobiliary affix, excepting the preposition *de* known as the *particule*. There were exceptions to this rule, and there were even then instances of persons who unduly assumed titles, amid the crowd of noble families ever increased by nomination to various offices in the realm, and also by purchase. This is, of course, only a very general view of a complicated subject which abounds in countless details and exceptions. It is a superficial sketch which may help to explain certain social phenomena conspicuous in France more than a century after the Revolution abolished not only privilege but also titles.

Napoleon maintained the first principle of the Revolution hostile to privilege. But he understood human nature, and recognised that men liked to be called by names which put them on a higher level than their fellow-creatures, even though they did not invest them with privileges; so he scattered titles broadcast, making his Marshals and Ministers Princes and Dukes, and including in the distribution of minor honours numerous members of the old nobility who rallied to the Empire. He had

not time to see the hereditary effect of his creations. When, however, the legitimate kings of France returned, they recognised many of the Imperial dignities and conferred others; some of them being attached to membership of the new Chamber of Peers, others being purely decorative, like our baronetcies, but all being unconnected with privilege, which was the basis of the nobility of the Old Regime.

The patents conferring titles under the Restoration limit them in line of primogeniture; but the old dynasty did not remain long enough on its recovered throne to enforce regularity or to see its ordinances carried out. Since the abdication of Charles X. in 1830 there has not been a ruler in France to whom French subjects of aristocratic pretensions have paid regard. The Faubourg St. Germain had equal scorn for Louis Philippe and for Napoleon III., and the efforts of the latter to introduce regularity in the bearing of titles had no effect.¹ The Government of the Republic having acted on the fiction that under a regime of which Equality is the official principle no titles can exist, the widest scope has been given to private enterprise.

The system which the more plausible of the assumers of titles have observed is as follows. A descendant in the male line of a family noble before the Revolution is quite aware that, being the younger son of younger sons, he would under the Old Regime have borne no title without a new creation. But, if he be over-scrupulous, he reasons, "Under the ancient Monarchy I should have been noble; I should have enjoyed certain privileges; and the only modern compensation for their disappearance being a title I have the right to use one." Not one in twenty of the persons so situated takes the trouble to argue thus. A man

¹ The "Loi contre l'usurpation des titres" passed in 1858 was not an honest attempt to settle this question, but rather an effort of the Imperial Government to obtain the favour of its Legitimist opponents who bore titles by giving them official consecration; but the law remained a dead letter, as the Royalists declined to register their titles while continuing to use them at their own discretion. The chief opponent of the measure in the Corps Législatif was M. Emile Ollivier, who afterwards rallied to the Empire, and he argued that the recognition of an hereditary nobility is contrary to the principles of the Revolution (Séance du 7 Mai 1858).

adopts a title, which perhaps his father used irregularly before him, because his friends do likewise. The off-shoots of ducal houses set an example in the democratic use of these adornments. In some of them there are dozens of multiplying younger branches, each member of which styles himself "Comte," and transmits the same designation to all his male posterity in perpetuity. The head of one of these families, whose dukedom dated from the early days of Louis XIV., told me that his own kinsmen, in thus styling themselves, defied tradition and profited from the disorder caused by the Revolution. In his province, moreover, where few of the local noblesse under the old Monarchy bore titles, its authentic representatives, perceiving that others with less claim than they to nobiliary attributes assumed them, called themselves under the Third Republic Counts or Barons for the first time in their immemorial annals. If the ancient gentry and the cadets of once great houses are willing to take such liberties with the usages of their Order, the scions of the Revolutionary nobility of the Empire naturally do likewise. Multitudes of others follow suit who can trace no connection either with the courtiers of Versailles or the magistrates of the Ancient Regime, with Napoleon's soldiers of fortune and functionaries, or with any one who has ever been granted a title by a ruler of France. It is obvious that a man who has some renown in literature or art, or even in industry, could not suddenly announce to the world that he had made himself a marquis or a baron. But, considering that any French citizen may assume a title with perfect impunity, and that its assumption in time may increase his own consideration, as well as augment the dowries he may demand for his sons when he arranges their marriages, it is surprising that any obscure people of independent means remain in France who have the self-restraint not to endow themselves with these ornamental advantages.

It is more surprising that the Government of the Republic has taken no step to curb the irregularity, which it connives at by a paradoxical application of the doctrine of Equality. The fiction is that titles borne by French subjects have no existence ;

so to recognise them, even for the purpose of limiting their use, would bring them into being and infringe the principle of Equality. The Government of the Republic does, however, recognise titles. In the official lists of the Legislative Chambers a member is invested with any nobiliary rank he likes to give himself. There are also many of the diplomatic servants of the Republic who bear titles which are formally confirmed by their Government in the documents accrediting them to foreign Courts. Moreover, when the President visits the provinces in state he is accompanied by functionaries of the Protocole, the power which regulates the ceremonial etiquette of the Republic, some of whom in the official account of the solemnities are formally described as noblemen. Therefore the Republic cannot repudiate its responsibility, which is grave for a reason not often recognised. The objection to the unlimited multiplication of titles at the will of the wearers is not merely a sentimental regret that a large section of the nation should bring ridicule on dignified or picturesque traditions, by following the example of Italy or Spain or other countries which, even though they have sovereigns to regulate such matters, ought not to be looked to by France for social guidance. The system is objectionable on economical as well as on social grounds.

Each year it increases a section of the community which adds nothing to the resources of the country, while it debases the national standard of intelligence. This will be shown by the mention of a remarkable fact. In the very numerous class claiming nobility, whether authentic or doubtful, ancient or modern, it would be difficult to cite, at the end of the nineteenth century, the names of six men born in the latter half of it who are known to fame or are believed to show promise.¹ The fact is the more

¹ In the army there are young officers belonging to noble families who are said to give remarkable promise, but in time of peace such military reputation is unknown to the public. It should be said that no officer in the French service, until he has passed the rank of Colonel, is permitted to use any nobiliary title, authentic or otherwise. But superior officers of distinction rarely avail themselves of the faculty, such affixes being regarded in France as of less prestige than high combatant titles. Marshal MacMahon was scarcely ever called Duc de Magenta, though he won that title on the battle-field. General Davout, in whose favour

lamentable because attractive youths of this class on leaving school, before they sink into a pitiful existence of futility, from which the profession of arms seems to be their only way of escape, often display intelligent qualities which ought to foretoken a bright and honourable future. Mgr. d'Hulst, shortly before his death, gave me his opinion on this point, on which he had exceptional knowledge, he being himself the chief of a noble Breton family, the intimate friend of the Comte de Paris, a Royalist deputy, and the head of the Catholic Institute of France. He was lamenting with some severity the position in the country of the men of good family; and being asked if it were an exaggeration to say that there were not six of them born in the last half of the century who even gave promise of brilliant achievement, the learned prelate, who was a pessimist, replied with emphasis, "You will not find three." All the young men of distinction belonging to that class are now older than Napoleon was when his career was ended. M. de Mun and his colleagues of the Academy, M. d'Haussonville and M. de Vogüé, as well as Mgr. d'Hulst himself, were all born before the middle of the century, in the last years of the Monarchy of July, and their successors are not apparent.

It should be noted that each of these descendants of noble houses has attained his distinction under the Republic; so it is not the influence of the regime which has hindered others of the same class from doing likewise. The policy of the Republic in keeping out of the public service those suspected of noble lineage is an excuse pleaded for the useless lives of persons so disqualified. But though young men of gentle birth or pretensions may, for their reactionary opinions, have thus been prevented from earning a pittance in the huge army of functionaries, they have not been debarred from paths of renown in the liberal professions, in letters, or in science, or indeed in the career of politics. Since

Napoleon III. revived the title conferred on his uncle by Napoleon after Jena, sometimes called himself Duc d'Auerstaedt when a General of Division under the Third Republic, and there was every reason for maintaining on the army list its glorious tradition. On the other hand, General de Galliffet, when on the active list, let his more ancient title of Marquis fall into disuse.

the death in 1882 of Gambetta, himself an example of fame made in opposition, not a single Republican office-holder has made a parliamentary reputation greater than that of M. de Mun. Of the scores of successive ministers several have adequately filled the places they have held, but not one has gained political fame unattainable by an active opponent of ministries. Since the Republic was governed by Republicans, the only department of the State in which distinction has been won is that of Foreign Affairs, wherein the employment of men of good social position, has not, for obvious reasons, been discouraged. It is not true that the Republic has entirely precluded bearers of noble names from illustrating honourable pursuits. The oratory of M. de Mun is not a gift to be obtained by taking thought. But parliamentary skill and political prominence are within the reach of the resolute, while diligence is the chief and indispensable element of literary success such as is enjoyed by the other Academicians whose names have been cited.

A Republic has its home in France greater than that which rests on the Constitution of 1875. In the commonwealth of letters distinction does not depend on the accident of a writer's birth or on his political sentiments; and since the fall of the First Empire the literature of the century, fabricated by men of most diverse origin, has been the greatest glory of the French nation, irrespective of change of regime. The Revolution, far from being repressive in its after-effects on the talents of the class which it had deposed, seemed after the reconstruction of France to encourage its sons to excel in the paths which their fathers had less often trodden in the old days of privilege. Under the Monarchy of July when the bourgeoisie was paramount, half the brilliant names foremost in every branch of literature were claimed to be of noble origin. Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Lamennais, Rémusat, Ségur, Barante, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Tocqueville, Alfred de Vigny, Balzac, and Montalembert all were, or professed to be, members of noble families. They represent the whole range of French style and

opinion in history, poetry, drama, romance, theology, and political philosophy, and each of them had made a name before attaining the age of forty.

No doubt the Monarchy of July was a period of exceptional literary splendour to which every class of society contributed, while the Third Republic is by comparison commonplace. But France continues to produce a number of admirable writers, and while the so-called noble class has increased enormously in proportion to the population, it is most rare for a writer of the first rank to claim connection with it, no matter what his opinions or his subject. Now, if the portion of the community which displays this and many another outward sign of decadence were a small and exclusive caste, living and intermarrying apart from the world, composed of fossilised patricians isolated in the pride of their parchments, such as are sometimes found in the provinces, its condition would have no national importance. But the exponents of sterile aristocratic pretension are an expanding multitude, not suffering from stagnation of the blood which has destroyed many a genuine aristocracy. Even when they bear rightfully noble family names, they are often the offspring of several generations of alliances with the shrewd French middle-class, or with opulent foreigners of equal intelligence, notably of Jewish or American origin. Thus the peril to society lies in the fact that every year a great section of the population, increasing by the operation of the laws of nature and of human vanity, is diverted from profitable and praiseworthy pursuits to form an idle class, without tradition, ideal, or prospects.

In the interest of the whole community the Government of the Republic ought to have interfered. Some of its partisans avow with cynicism that as the wearers of titles, whatever their origin, are Reactionaries, it has been in the interest of the Republic not to check them in courses which bring ridicule on the enemies of the established regime. This is the reasoning of opportunism rather than of statesmanship, which would not have permitted this wanton drain on the resources and intellect of France. The craving for titular distinction is a curious phase

of modern democracies. As we have seen, the presumably meritorious, such as are invested with titles in our country, have in France to be satisfied with a ribbon, which, however, is not less an infringement of the principle of Equality. But the wearing of a decoration does not perniciously influence a Frenchman in the performance of his duties to society, and indeed the hope of obtaining a higher grade may inspire him to effort; whereas the self-assumed or invented nobiliary title inspires its holder with no worthier resolve than to turn it indolently to material profit.

Only the Government of the Republic could have undertaken the serious task of regulating the assumption of titles; for it alone could with impunity offend the wearers of them, they being an anti-Republican force. If a Monarchy were re-established, the sovereign, whether absolute or constitutional, would have to take every precaution to conciliate all classes of his new subjects, and he would hasten his return into private life if he began to meddle with the fancies of his most devoted adherents. An important supporter of the Comte de Paris told me that he knew several holders of palpably home-made titles, who, having offered their fealty to the pretender and their purses to his cause, had received gracious letters from Sheen or from Stowe, commencing "Mon cher Comte" or "Mon cher Marquis," and signed "Philippe." These the recipients treated as patents of nobility not less authentic than those whereby Charles IX. and Henry IV. respectively conferred the dukedoms of Thouars and of La Trémoille on the ancestor of the present titular of those ancient fiefs.

If strength or statesmanship had been found in the Governments of the Republic, it would have been easy to remedy the abuse, as in France the State exercises arbitrary powers in regulating the nomenclature of its citizens. A Frenchman is perpetually called upon to produce his "papers," relating to the registration of his birth, in order to verify his identity, and the strictest restraint is put upon the alteration of his family or baptismal names. It is a curious contrast between the habits of the two countries, that while in England a man with unmusical or grotesque appellations

may with faintest formality exchange them for a stately combination suggesting illustrious kinship, yet if he unduly describe himself a lord he is suspected of defrauding tradesmen or of being an escaped lunatic. Whereas in France any citizen may with success make himself into a marquis or a count, though if he take upon himself to alter his civil names inscribed on his birth certificate he is subject to the sternest penalties. More than that, a French father is restricted in the choice of the names he may give his child. He may not call him by a surname, either for legitimate family reasons, or because of romantic sound, or in honour of a favourite author or politician. He may not spur his infant to ambition by naming him Voltaire or Bossuet, or Robespierre or Bonaparte, or Gambetta or Zola. If he wishes to endow him with a perpetual stimulus to valour or patriotism, or virtue or piety, he can call him Achille or Marius, or Aristide or Xavier. For the great reconstructor of France decreed that no names could be accorded to a French subject but those found in the calendars of the saints or in the history of antiquity,¹ thus also precluding fantastic parents from naming their offspring after savage potentates or abstract virtues.

No one but a barbarian would wish to abolish titles, ancient or modern, which have been handed on from father to son with historic continuity, whether they took their origin in the Court of Versailles or on the battle-fields of the Empire,—though the regulation of their use is of urgent expediency. Nothing of historical interest in architecture or in personal attribute should

¹ *Loi du 11 Germinal An XI.* (April 1803). The most elaborate formalities are required for any modification of the names attributed to a French subject when his birth was registered. If he desire a change in consequence of some error then committed, the tribunals can authorise the alteration after due proof; but any other change of nomenclature can only be effected by the Government after solemn petition. Not only in legal documents, but in official lists a man's family name has to be inscribed as it was borne by his ancestors, even though his father before him used the modified form. Thus on the roll of the Institute M. Jules Simon was inscribed as "Jules François Simon-Suisse dit Jules Simon," and in the list of the Chamber of Deputies M. Lockroy, the kinsman of Victor Hugo, is entered as "Édouard Simon dit Lockroy, fils de Joseph Simon dit Lockroy." Chantal is one of the rare surnames given to French children in baptism, Mme. de Chantal having been canonized and thus taking her place in the Calendar of Saints.

ever be destroyed in a civilised nation, unless its preservation causes actual injury to human beings. At the Revolution it was as necessary to deal with the wealth of the Church as it was to take away the privileges of the nobles, both having conduced to the misery of the people ; but the mutilation of noble buildings was as indefensible as the burning of parchments. The official care taken by the Republic of the Invalides at Paris, of the Cathedral at Reims, or of the Maison Carrée at Nîmes, does not commit the Government of France to the cult of the religion of Antonines or of Clovis, or to the revival of the splendours of Louis XIV. In the same way the legal recognition of the ducal title of Uzès, created the year of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or of the princely title of Moskowa, conferred on Marshal Ney, would not make the Republic suspected of producing a Catherine de Médicis or a Napoleon. They are historical monuments which ought to be preserved as such.

Certain incidents inspired by an inheritor of the former title threw light on the attitude of the Republic to such relics of past regimes. The Duc d'Uzès was an amiable young man descended paternally from the line of dukes created in 1572, and from the Veuve Clicquot of genial commercial tradition by his mother,—who was the most serious enemy the Republic ever had outside its own ranks, as she gave £120,000 to General Boulanger when he seemed to need nothing but funds to destroy it. The Duke in travelling to the Congo did what would have passed unnoticed in England, whence every year men of good position go to spend their holidays on adventurous journeys. When in 1893 he died by fever on the expedition, officials of the Republic outdid reactionary journalists in giving importance to the untimely ending of an unknown young nobleman, which in our country would have been dismissed with a sympathetic paragraph in the newspapers. But the event was doubly noteworthy in France. It behoves the Government to encourage every class of its citizens when they show symptoms of a taste for voyaging, the lack of which in the nation checks the effective establishment of a colonial empire ; and the case of a rich and well-born youth quitting the facile joys

of the Boulevards for the arduous pleasures of travel was phenomenal. At all events his death received more official notice than if he had been the son of a Republican politician. The minister himself bore the news to the family, and at the funeral, at the ancestral château in the Cevennes, a Republican officer was deputed by the Ministry to represent it. The official delegate said he was "sent by the Government of the Republic to express the unanimous sorrow of the nation for the Duc d'Uzès who had displayed exceeding strength of character in foregoing the life of a favourite of fortune, his wealth and the splendour of his great name having already realised for him the dreams of human ambition."¹

In these words publicly pronounced by the representative of the Government there was first the formal recognition of an ancient title, disposing of the pretended inability of the Republic to admit the existence of such an anomaly. There was then the splendour and greatness attributed to the name, not by an advocate of the privileges of the ancient Court, who might justifiably use those terms in a special sense, but by the official mouthpiece of the Republic, which theoretically refuses to ascribe greatness to any contemporary name, except for the personal achievement of its bearer. But there was a still graver repudiation of the principle of Equality. There was the suggestion of the idea prevalent in France, expressed sometimes in contemptuous, sometimes in respectfully envious form, to the effect that there is a class of favoured beings called, in defiance of etymology and of history, the "aristocracy," which has no other vocation or duty than the pursuit of pleasure at Paris and in the resorts of Parisians; and that should one of its members weary of a life of which the foremost exponents are often the prodigal heirs of tradesmen, he deserves to be lauded as a hero of renunciation. That demoral-

¹ "Le Gouvernement de la République m'a chargé de vous exprimer, Madame la Duchesse, en son nom et au nom de tous les Français de cœur, les regrets unanimes de ses concitoyens de la mort de celui qui fut le Duc Jacques d'Uzès. Il fallut au défunt une grande force d'âme pour renoncer à la vie des heureux de ce monde; jouissance de la fortune, éclat d'un grand nom, tel que le rêvent les ambitieux de ce monde."—*Discours du Délégué du Gouvernement aux obsèques du Duc d'Uzès* 27 Sept. 1893.

ising idea is fostered by the perpetual increase of titled persons in France. But there are also other influences, less special in character, which have affected the upper classes,—to use that conventional expression, the currency of the synonyms of which in the French language is another contradiction of the principle of Equality after a century of Revolution.

III

If the society which calls itself aristocratic¹ had no other faults than an exaggerated distaste for republics and for the principle of Equality, it would be easy to pardon its abstention from public affairs. If its conspicuous members formed a community preserving the tradition of the Ancient Regime with prejudices softened by a perfume of old-world mellowness, one might commend them for shrinking from the mire of politics without reminding them of the Revolutionary origin of their fortunes, or of the unauthenticity of their titles. They might then be compared to a sacerdotal caste which guarded the disestablished temples of a once powerful cult; which preserved with such fidelity the rites of a bygone age, that the onlooker did not ask for proofs of the priestly succession of all the ministers, or for the history of the trappings decking some of the altars reared again.

The more thoroughly the eighteenth century is studied, and the more closely modern French society is observed, the more clearly is it seen that the failings of the latter have no relation with the peculiar shortcomings of the Old Regime. Parisians of fashion will sometimes bewail that they are the victims of hereditary frivolity; that if they are incapable of leading useful lives it is because their ancestors supped at the Palais Royal or masqueraded at Trianon. Many who make this lament have in their veins little of the blood of the courtiers; but apart from the contrary fiction currently assumed, it is to be remarked that

¹ These pages describe only one phase of existence in the French upper classes, and in many secluded châteaux lives are led of dignified and blameless simplicity (see book iv. c. iii. p. 559).

the failings of French society to-day all fall into categories not exclusively French. They are either those which have been practised in all ages and in all lands by the idle and the self-indulgent, or they are the special outcome of the civilisation of our epoch.

If we study French society in the eighteenth century from its dawn, described by St. Simon, to the Revolution, which sent Madame de Genlis on her wanderings, each new mode and each new exponent of it can be followed month by month and year by year. The age of memoirs is past. Like the salon, they survived the Revolution for half a hundred years, but like it they could not survive the era of railways and of plutocracy. Yet the genius of the French to catch fleeting follies, and to describe them in vivid language, is not extinct. The real personages of to-day are too insignificant to have their names recorded, excepting in the cheap press, the society they compose is too uninteresting; but they afford types for the modern penciller to seize. So when we are weary of the bright throngs which flitted through the chamber of the Duchesse du Maine, or were fêted by the Prince de Conti, we can turn to the sprightly page of Gyp, and see what right the idlers of the present hour have to call themselves the successors of the Old Regime. The vivacious authoress who has adopted that name belongs to the class which she portrays, and she sometimes lays herself open to the charge of malice and of caricature. But the cruel truth of photography is the chief offence of that censorious literature in which she has some talented rivals of the other sex. Indeed its subjects are hardly appropriate for the higher forms of art. A sketch by such a censor of the Boulevards may be compared to an instantaneous photograph of one of those strangely packed stage-coaches, sometimes seen in the Champs Élysées on the way to the racecourse at Auteuil. The fashionable Parisians seated on them boisterously herald to passers-by that the imagination of the successors of the wittiest and most brilliant society of the past can invent no happier employment for their wealth and leisure than a parody of an English pastime.

We turn from this spectacle, worthy only of the itinerant camera, to the galleries of the Louvre, where the sumptuous canvas of Van Loo displays the grace and refinement of French diversion in the past. The stately picture entitled *Une halte de chasse* represents also men and women on out-door pleasure bent. But in the eighteenth century, though there was an interchange of modes between the two nations, French wit and opulence did not parade inept imitations of British sport; and the gallant company reposing after the morning's chase would have disdained to be mere copyists of the costume or to travesty the language of our rubicund fox-hunters of the days of Walpole. The faults of French society at that epoch were doubtless grievous, and grievously were they expiated; but it invested even its follies with a cultured ease, and with its inimitable stamp richly emblazoned a page of the history of civilisation. We know now that the light-hearted hunting-parties of Marly and Rambouillet were a generation later to end on the scaffold or in exile; but on their way thither the blithe followers of the chase compelled the envy of Europe, and in the grace of their existence and deportment offered to art and to literature material which, wrought with the skill of the age, still adds to the joy of the world. No tragedy specially awaits the modern leaders of Parisian society. Social divisions have been invented undreamed of at the Revolution, and the would-be exponents of the nobility, whose last corporate act was to decline to be fused with the Third Estate, are now by strange irony ranked as "bourgeois" by the new revolutionaries. It is, however, a pity that the claimants of the tradition of the Old Regime should in their trivial domain of pleasure-seeking thus justify the new social classification by taking as their model the imitative plutocracies of the New World.

The superiority of French society of the Old Regime over its degenerate successors was not merely in its faculty of inventing a style, and of impregnating the century with its savour. It did not content itself with creating a distinct school of art by offering to painters models of gracious elegance, and with furnishing to

memoir writers the sparkling conversation of a polished Court, in which, no doubt, it was aided by the prestige of the royal circle from which it depended. It also displayed a quality which is attainable by the upper class of any society, under any regime. It took delight in the companionship of the most brilliant intellects of the time. It was the age destined to change the history of humanity; but the women and the men who dictated the fashion to Europe little recked that the social fabric which protected them was being subverted by the philosophers whom they cultivated. Thus it was in salons that the new doctrine was first rehearsed, and in châteaux one day to be sacked by its forcible application.

It was among the groves of Grandval that Diderot discussed with the Encyclopædists; it was in that famous château of M. d'Holbach that he planned his most audacious theses. It was for Mme. D'Épinay that Rousseau composed *Émile*; and in her salon, as in that of the Duc de Luxembourg, the uncouth presence of Jean-Jacques, redolent of his rustic days of privation in Savoy, was the most welcome; while Voltaire, who had passed his life in an atmosphere royal and aristocratic, was ending it at Ferney, where he held a court, and whither the noblest and most refined exponents of French society went in pilgrimage. At the moment when the Court of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette had reached its zenith of brilliancy, Arthur Young, in spite of an agriculturist's sympathy for the farmer-like qualities of his own sovereign, was not able to compare favourably the influence of the blameless George III. with that of the French King. Among his vaticinations of the approaching Revolution he observes, "Persons of the highest rank pay all attention to science and literature. I should pity the man who expected, without other advantages of a very different nature, to be well received in a brilliant circle at London because he was a fellow of the Royal Society; but a member of the Academy of Sciences at Paris is sure of a good reception everywhere."¹

¹ *Travels in France*, Oct. 1787.

It may be retorted that the society of the eighteenth century would have done better not to have encouraged the philosophers ; and if the modern upper class were overwhelmed by a cataclysm, it might truthfully protest that it had not provoked it by commerce with men of intellect. But it may be observed that the greatest French intelligences of our age have been anti-revolutionary in tendency. Renan was the very type most sought after in the salons of the Old Regime, a Voltairian of aristocratic instinct. Yet the trifling descendants of pilgrims to Ferney, whose modern clericalism does not restrain them from paying court to Jewish financiers, disdained to cultivate the historian of the House of Israel. Pasteur, on the other hand, was a sincere Catholic, who brought more credit on his religion than all his compatriots of rank. Taine was the destroyer of the legend of the Revolution. Men so illustrious require a society more attractive than that which fashionable France can now show ; but there are brilliant writers, thinkers and artists, surviving them and best representing modern French civilisation, who regret the separation of fashion from intelligence in repudiation of the tradition of the Old Regime.

The composition of the so-called aristocratic society may account for this. The majority, which has more pretension than tradition, imposes its tone. The growing crowds which bear titles of phantasy naturally seek to consecrate them by frequenting exclusively the less irregular nobility. Again, the wealthy society of Paris becomes every year more cosmopolitan, and children of the Republics of the two Western continents do not colonise Europe primarily for the sake of the intellectual attractions of its capitals. Thus the increasing number of marriages with rich foreigners does not elevate the tone of Parisian society. Dowerless wedlock is not favoured in France in any class of life ; and as testamentary liberty is restricted, the heads of once great families have been able to maintain a relatively high position only by wealthy marriages. But alliances with the sole heiresses of rich French families, whether noble or industrial, have usually had no demoralising effect.

They have been contracted according to the ideas of social economy cherished in the nation, and the fortunes they have united have not been so inordinately large as to induce luxury alien to the tradition of the parent stock. It may be here remarked that the lives of Frenchwomen of the unoccupied upper class are often in admirable contrast to those of the men. Their virtues are of the type usually attributed to the women of the bourgeoisie. They are devoted mothers, excellent housewives, and patterns of piety. The orderliness of their existence and their virile qualities counteract the undisciplined or aimless example of their husbands; and in many a household in the decorative section of society the woman is the superior, morally and mentally, of her lord. But brides from beyond the Ocean or beyond the Rhine, whether Aryan or Semitic, are apt to regard Paris as a playground, and the endowment of an indigent title as a means of entering into its pastimes. Thus the daughters of native capitalists acquire the imported idea that the chief use of riches is to make a conspicuous figure in the world of triflers.

These observations lead us to an important point in our inquiry into the relation of modern France with the Revolution. Its latest phase, the Third Republic, has doubtless greatly modified the condition of society. Under it the separation between politics and social amenity has been complete; the failure of the Government to regulate the increasing assumption of nobiliary titles being, moreover, one of the outward signs of the resulting disarray. But mere negative influences such as these would not alone have so transformed the society of the capital. The change in its tone is chiefly due, not to the Revolution, but to the increased influence of wealth; to the rise of the plutocracy, and not to the Fall of the Bastille. The salon survived that event for two generations; and in the second quarter of this century the social commerce of men and women in the highest circles of Paris was as brilliant, perhaps, as in the days of Madame Geoffrin and of the Marquise du Deffant.

The keenest observers from England at that period noted the superiority of Paris over London in this respect. The chapters

in *Coningsby* describing the French capital are simply passages from Mr. Disraeli's journal of 1842.¹ They refer, therefore, to the epoch fifty years after the Emigration; and during that chequered half-century society had undergone many transformations, culminating in the foundation of the anti-aristocratic Monarchy of July, then in its full prosperity. "Nothing strikes me more in this brilliant city," said Coningsby, "than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. How much conversation and how little gossip! Here all women are as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of half a dozen. Men, too, and great men, develop their minds. A great man in England, on the contrary, is generally the dullest dog in company." Lord Beaconsfield's sphinx-like silence in society in his later days may have proceeded from a desire to adopt the usages of the people he governed. At this period, however, he was often denounced, by Tories, as well as by Whigs, as "un-English," and to that quality was ascribed his sympathy with things French. But if Mr. Disraeli had little of the Briton in his nature, he was still more unlike a Frenchman. In his occidental capacity he was purely English. In Paris he sat down each morning to a British breakfast-table with *Galignani* before him, and an aggressively British wife by his side. No doubt it was his cosmopolitan genius which aided him to appreciate the merits of French social intercourse; but there is unimpeachably English testimony as to the vitality of the aristocratic salon at that epoch. Henry Bulwer, in his studies on the Monarchy of the Middle-Classes, speaks of the exclusion of the nobility from politics, diplomacy, and other careers under Louis Philippe, which is a grievance under the Third Republic, and adds that, "defeated in the market-place and the forum, it has entrenched itself in the salon."² Contemporary French memoirs, comedies, and romances, as well as the souvenirs of survivors of the period, all show that neither the Terror nor the Emigration, neither the battles of the First Empire

¹ *Coningsby*, bk. v. c. 8; bk. vi. c. 1. *Lord Beaconsfield's Letters*, 1842.

² *The Monarchy of the Middle-Classes*, by Henry Lytton Bulwer, Esq., M.P. (afterwards Lord Dalling), 1836.

nor the middle-class domination of "July" had divorced the cultured class from the nobility.

Thus the salon, which survived the Revolution and the reconstruction of society, has now become extinct in an epoch of which the political and social upheavals have been relatively mild. The reason was suggested unconsciously by Disraeli in a letter to his sister describing his life in Paris. With perhaps the contempt of his race for persons with moderate incomes (which he attributed to his hero Lord Monmouth), after reciting a list of the noble persons he had met in salons containing elements most pleasing and intelligent, he exclaims, "What names! but where are the territories? There are only one hundred men in France who have £10,000 a year. Henry Hope and Rothschild could buy them all!"

The chapters of the *Esprit des Loix* on Equality¹ have had considerable influence on the social history of France, as in them Montesquieu defended the principle of equal testamentary division of property among children, which, not anticipating the Napoleonic regime, he declared could not be established in a despotic State. In that connection he says that the complement of equality is frugality. His speculations on the advantages of the Republican over other forms of government have been falsified in the later history of France; but his remarks on Equality may be taken to heart in our generation, when the rule of wealth is upsetting most of the theories of political philosophers, and becoming so omnipotent that the social composition of the communities under its sway is more affected by it than by the regime of the State, republican or monarchical, constitutional or arbitrary.

IV

Though the growing power of wealth is the chief destroyer of the qualities which once distinguished Parisian society, and though it has introduced into France new social distinctions, class-feeling independently of the possession of riches has survived both the

¹ *De l'esprit des Loix*, livre v. c. 4, 5, 6, etc.

Revolution and the establishment of institutions which might be expected to promote equality. The educational system might be thought to discourage the ancient class-feeling, and to counteract its new forms in a plutocratic age; but it seems to have the contrary effect. In England, the boys of the section of society known as the upper and upper-middle classes are for the most part educated in a score or so of ancient and modern foundations, the cheapest of which is expensive from the French point of view. In France such schools are unknown. The secondary education of the country is imparted either in the Lycées of the State or in Colleges conducted by religious Orders.¹ In neither category are there institutions set apart for the wealthy and well-born classes. Of public schools, the Collège Stanislas at Paris is the one most favoured by them. Of the 1500 boys 200 have names prefixed with the *particule*, signifying that they claim to be of gentle birth. Among the remaining 1300 boarders and day-boys are to be found the sons, not merely of rich business men, of judicial and political personages and of leaders of the liberal professions, but also of small tradesmen, and of other persons in relatively humble walks of life. All the boys are treated on terms of equality, the titles of those who would seem to have the right to bear them not being recognised.² In the schools conducted exclusively by ecclesiastics it is the same. In Brittany, where caste feeling is strong, the sons of the old Breton nobility are brought up at the Jesuit College at Vannes with the sons of the shopkeepers and peasant farmers of the Morbihan.

All this might be supposed to tend to the obliteration of class-feeling. The hourly contact and comradeship, at an age when other considerations appeal to the imagination more strongly than those of social rank; the absolute equality inculcated in the monotonous discipline; the identical mean-looking

¹ There are also mixed organisations like Stanislas, and municipal colleges like Chaptal, both in Paris

² e.g. in the school-lists of Stanislas the Prince de Léon (a title held by the eldest sons of the Ducs de Rohan ever since the creation of the dukedom in 1652, than which it is more ancient) is entered as J de Rohan-Chabot, with no more distinguishing mark attached to his name than to that of the son of a notary on another page which has the *particule*.

costume and the limited wardrobe prescribed for all the boys alike ; the dormitory system and the absence of private quarters admitting of decoration according to a schoolboy's idea of luxury ; the small temptation to spend pocket-money ; the promenades taken in common ; and the restrictions on the free choice of friendships—in fine, the whole working of the machine is calculated to turn out individuals stripped of all superstitions regarding class inequality. It probably is this very uniformity which destroys its own egalitarian object. The accident of contact is not sufficient to generate lasting sympathy. The friendships of youth, which, in spite of the vicissitudes of life, leave a durable trace on the memory and imagination of men, need to have been begun amid agreeable associations, and to have been nurtured by the sentiment called *esprit de corps*. Now, though our tongue has no equivalent for that French expression, it connotes a sentiment less known in France than in England. It can scarcely be said to exist in French school-life. The feeling is so slender that a man's most intimate friends neither know nor care where he was educated, and even the official biographies of legislators or academicians rarely give that information.¹ As for agreeable associations, a French collegian, whether he goes home to a sumptuous hôtel in the Faubourg St. Germain or to an attic in the Batignolles, whether his holidays are spent in a historic château or in a humble farm-house, regards his Lycée as a penitentiary in which young creatures are immured to give them a greater zest for the liberty or license of manhood. Usually the only youths who delight in their school-days are those precocious students whose sole love is learning, or the unfortunates, rare in France, whose harsh childhood has been spent in unhappy homes. The English idea of sending a boy to school to make advantageous acquaintances, which has sadly transformed the tone of our most

¹ In the volume of Biographies of the Deputies returned to the Chamber of 1893-98, most of them written in great detail, in the first seventy the schools or colleges of only two members are mentioned. The pupils of certain establishments of superior education, notably the École Normale and the École Polytechnique, are not wanting in *esprit de corps* ; but among secondary schools the only Lycée which seems to inspire that sentiment is Condorcet, a day-school in Paris where there are no boarders.

famous foundations, never enters the head of a French parent. A tradesman ambitious for his son does not imagine that his future social position will be improved because he has for class-fellows the heirs to high-sounding titles, or the children of millionaire bankers.¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that universal military service, which puts on a level, during a later period of discipline, those who have been brought up in elementary schools with those who have had the advantages of secondary education, should have no effect in propagating the sentiment of social equality. Even among French officers, who are drawn from more diverse classes of the community than those of the British army, there is, in time of peace at all events, not much intimate comradeship, in the same regiment, between those who belong to different social ranks.

The uniformity of Education of all classes higher than those brought up in elementary schools has one result bearing the superficial aspect of equality. While there are members of certain professions who unmistakably bear the stamp of them, it is often difficult in France even for Frenchmen to recognise, by means of a brief conversation on different topics, to which social category a man, met casually, belongs. An agreeable companion of a railway journey, who in admirable language discourses on the European situation or on art and literature, may turn out to be a person of such social surroundings that an Englishman of corresponding situation would express himself crudely on those subjects, and with unrefined pronunciation or accent. Such an experience is an example of the truth that civilisation descends lower in the French nation than in ours. On the other hand, Frenchmen of highest social rank take pains to assert that they stand lower in the scale of civilised humanity

¹ In one very honourable way boys are sometimes sent to a Lycée to make influential acquaintances. If a parent intends his son for the "University," that is to say the profession of schoolmaster, he sends him to a Lycée having a distinguished professorial staff, in order that he may early attract the notice, if he show promise, of those who will later be his chiefs and colleagues. But that motive has nothing to do with the question of social gradation. Girls of the bourgeoisie are, however, sometimes sent to fashionable convents for the sake of social advantages.

than Englishmen of the corresponding class. They insist that the more nearly they approach in exterior attributes the British model the more nearly do they attain perfection—and imitation is a sign of inferiority. This is not the place to study the philosophy of Anglomania, which, as practised in the upper circles of Paris, is in my opinion much to be deplored. Here we are treating of class distinction; so all that need be said on the subject is, that since the disappearance of the last members of the noblesse brought up with the survivors of the Emigration, who retained the savour of the Old Regime, a French gentleman of fashionable pretension usually assumes no other perceptible attributes to distinguish him from his less favoured countrymen than the use of English clothes and English phrases in the pursuit of English pastimes.

The permeation of civilisation to a level in France lower than in other communities is a gratifying feature of the national life. The country tradesman or the village postmaster often reveals in his unstudied speech the urbanity of good breeding, and cottagers sometimes astonish strangers with their charm of manner. No doubt there are regions of France where the peasants are boorish and their personal habits unattractive; but, on the whole, their civilisation is remarkable. Their stores of household linen, their excellent cooking, the propriety of their attire, though not universal, exist as signs of the force of the French race which resists the disorderliness of its governors. At nightfall the traveller who passes through remote villages sometimes sees through the open cottage door the evening meal neatly laid with a comfort unknown in middle-class houses in other civilised lands. If he visits a rural mining district, which, from the language of the deputies who represent it at Paris and of their journals, he might believe was peopled by anarchical savages, he will not find a population given to brutal diversion or to intemperance. If he enters the humble abode of a collier or of an ironworker he may perhaps see him, surrounded by his family, taking his dinner served with accessories only found at the tables of the rich in other countries.

No doubt there is another side to the picture, and the daily life of the French nation abounds in scenes as unpleasing as any to be found in other modern communities. If a writer sets to work, like M. Zola, to prove that labourers or miners or shopmen are sometimes revolting in their lives, it is easy to gather testimony in support. But his inductive method is as unscientific and as misleading as that of less eminent French writers, who, by collating reports of English tribunals, seek to show that the English are a nation of profligate hypocrites. Some of the work of M. Zola deserves a high rank in the contemporary literature of Europe; but even though he has never set down a single incident without documentary evidence, he has none the less slandered his countrymen in his compilations. More than that, the humble French people whom he holds up to horror in *Germinal* and *La Terre* are, considering their arduous disadvantages, relatively much more civilised than the class to which M. Zola belongs. For the points on which the civilisation of the French provoke most criticism are those displayed, not by the poor alone, but by the whole nation. For example, in appliances of sanitation, now much improved in France, the dwellings of the rich were until late years as defective as those of the humble. On another point of civilisation there has been decided deterioration under the Third Republic. Public decency is less respected in France than at any time since the Directory. For the coarse indecorum of the music-halls and the impropriety of a portion of the press the peasants and working people are not responsible; and until a Government arises strong enough to suppress license, the profession of which M. Zola is a hierophant might, if it pleased, execute the civilising task.

In spite of the naturalist school, the traveller in France may believe his own eyes and ears when the modest shopkeeper in the Vendée, or the villager in the Berry, gives him artless display of the descent of civilisation to low social strata in France. There are French theorists who pretend that its permeation among the humble is the result of the Revolution; but that suggestion is both uncomplimentary to the French race and

untrue. When, one may ask, did the Revolution work on the lowly its civilising mission? Was it when the *tricoteuses* took their infants to see men and women hurried to the guillotine? Was it when Napoleon was making of France a nation of widows and orphans? Under the Restoration and the succeeding regimes, no doubt, increased well-being did elevate the condition of the working-classes, but the Revolution had only indirectly to do with those periods. Moreover, if the Third Republic be accounted the immediate inheritor of the Revolutionary tradition, it is to be feared that under it, in spite of the spread of education and of other advantages, the old urbanity and refinement of the race have suffered detriment.

The civilisation of France, of which traces are found in all classes of society, is an heritage of the ages, and its possession accounts for the good use to which Frenchmen of modest origin can put the advantages of a diffused education. The Republic has not been a regime to employ, in places of prominence, the worthiest specimens of the nation. But ministers and other conspicuous representatives of the Government, though not endowed with the genius which outweighs defects of training, have often filled the high posts conferred on them without the awkwardness which in other countries sometimes characterises men who have risen. Some of those who thus ascend from humble ranks are political apostles of Equality; but in practice they define it according to the conception of it noted at the outset of our inquiry. It is a virtue which prevents a right-minded Republican from acknowledging a superior, while not diminishing his right to exact due deference from his inferiors. It is not only the public servants of the democracy who enjoy the obeisance of their subordinates. A Parisian tradesman who talks to his customers, whatever their rank, with gracious and familiar ease, would, on returning to his fireside, be scandalised if his domestics addressed him in the second person, as a servant would speak to his master in England, where equality is not an official doctrine. Flaubert, who was a keen observer of the foibles of his nation, noted the pleasure which thrilled his socially

ambitious heroine of the lower middle-class when she thus heard herself addressed in the third person ; and under the Republic the practice has not been interfered with.

There is one institution which, in its actual form, may be said to have been handed down from the Revolution as a symbol of the great principle that men should consider themselves equal with persons of higher social rank than they. The ridiculous aspect of the modern duel is a fertile theme for French wits ; but little heed has been taken of its egalitarian character, though that has hindered ridicule from putting an end to it. Before the Revolution the duel in France, as in other countries, was a method of settling quarrels usually confined to gentlemen having the right to bear arms. A bitter grievance of the roturier was that in no case could he call out a noble. One of the fiercest regicides of the Convention was Lacroix, the champion of Marat, who finally went to the guillotine in the same cart with Camille Desmoulins, whose doctrine of Equality we know. An incident of his youth ever rankled in his heart. One night, before the Bastille fell, when coming out of a theatre he was hustled by a gentleman, who, on his expostulating, replied, "Who are you?" The young provincial recited his name and qualities, when the other interrupted, "I am glad to hear you are all that: I am the Comte de Chabannes, and in a great hurry." The most sceptical as to the benefits of the French Revolution cannot deny that it put an end to this particular hardship. At the present day in France a country lawyer, insulted by an ill-bred person, no matter what his rank, has the right to be killed by him the next day without the slightest penalty being inflicted on his slayer.

Yet though the lawyer and the politician may, thanks to the Revolution, demand satisfaction of men of highest social pretension, they will not accord it to persons of rank which they consider humbler than theirs. A journalist who has a casual altercation in the street with a man whose birth and fortune are far superior to his, claims the right to challenge such an one to combat. If, however, he in turn insulted a cabman in the same place, he would scorn the driver's threat

to send his seconds, even though he were the owner of the vehicle and so not under menial disability. Moreover, though both were of precisely the same social origin, both sons of peasants, the penman would to the coachman adopt the tone with which M. de Chabannes turned the young Lacroix into a malign apostle of the doctrine of Equality. Now I would not venture to criticise this code of honour. To cross swords or exchange bullets with a politician or a journalist, whatever his antecedents or repute, may be a chivalrous survival of the ages of romance; while to meet in combat a person of similar origin who gains an honest livelihood by manual toil may be undignified. But while recognising the delicate distinction, one may submit that, as an application of the principle of Equality, it is conventional and inconsistent.

A senator of the Third Republic, M. Victor Schoelcher, to the end of his long life, which began under the Consulate, was, according to current anecdote, the type of the Republican regarding himself as the equal of the highest in the land, but disdainful to his inferiors. In his young days he applied somewhat inconveniently the duelling privilege of equality won by the Revolution; for, serving in his father's shop in the rue Drouot, he used to challenge customers who perversely carped at the price of the wares. The spirit which moved this son of the Revolution, whom Napoleon III. exiled for his republicanism, is said sometimes to animate the whole body of Republican senators and deputies, who are not always eager to extend to humbler citizens advantages which they secure for themselves. In some respects the interests of the democracy are better looked after by our Imperial Parliament than under the French regime of Equality. The contrast between the favour shown to third-class passengers on railways in Monarchical England, and the penalty of miserable travel inflicted upon them in Republican France, is most significant, as there the Government has infinitely greater powers of pressure on the companies than has ours. But the poor traveller in the land of Equality has to loiter with the discomfort

of fifty years ago; while the privileged rich enjoy the luxury of swiftness. One reason may be that all legislators have first-class passes to travel on all the railways of France.¹ The theory that a member of Parliament ought not to incur expense in travelling the 30 or the 300 miles between his constituency and the capital does not seem to justify his right to journey gratuitously on the 30,000 miles of the French railway system. Hence less favoured advocates of Equality enviously point to the spectacle of Socialist deputies, after the fatigue of promoting a strike in the foggy North, speeding to the Mediterranean in costless ease to recruit their forces.

The mention of the Socialists may suggest the remark that nothing has been said here of the one party in the State which has equality of condition for its cardinal principle. French Socialism at the end of the nineteenth century is a phenomenon of high importance, which will be examined in later portions of this work. But it has little to do with this section, treating of the relations of modern France with the Revolution, for its theories are utterly at variance with the doctrine of 1789. No doubt there are passages of Rousseau which argue that private property cannot exist, and that its possessors are only depositaries of public wealth. It is also true that the first practical result of the Revolution was anarchy, which took the form of an insurrection against property. But the recognition of individual proprietorship was one of the fundamental bases of the Declaration of the Rights of Man; and throughout the Revolution, in its philosophic stage, in its moments of greatest horror, as well as in its reactionary and reconstructive phases, the

¹ Ten francs a month are deducted from the salary of each senator and deputy to pay for the passes. The dependence of the railways on the Government, partly owing to the State-guarantee of interest, is such that the President of the Republic on his journeys through France travels at the expense, not of the State (a practice which would be intelligible), but of the companies of the lines over which his fancy leads him; and on his official tours his gratuitously-carried suite includes forty or fifty journalists to record his words, deeds, and diet. It is needless to say that the Queen of England travelling on the railway of her realm pays for her journeys like any of her subjects.

principle was respected. Indeed, one reason why the tenets of collectivism and of State Socialism, with their egalitarian tendency, make less progress in France than in England among the prosperous classes is that the French bourgeoisie is deeply imbued with the individualism of the great Revolution.

CHAPTER IV

FRATERNITY AND PATRIOTISM

I

FROM documents of the Revolutionary period it would seem that the word Fraternity was not made an integral part of the device of the First Republic until the year of the Terror. Previous to that phase of the brotherhood of mankind the new reformers sometimes enunciated Liberty and Equality without their complementary virtue.¹ Although the practice of the two former has been, as we have seen, peculiar in France since the Revolution, they have not been affected by it to the same extent as has been the principle of Fraternity. Prince Metternich, who was reaching manhood when the French Republic erected the guillotine as the symbol of brotherly love, said in later life, after his varied visits to Paris, "Fraternity as it is practised in France has led me to the conclusion that if I had a brother I would call him my cousin."

The sarcasm of the Austrian diplomatist, like every generalisation applied to the French, requires careful qualification. In their private and domestic capacity there are no people in the world so devoted and considerate to one another. In all

¹ The device of "Liberty and Equality" seems to be originally due to Montesquieu, who wrote from England in 1729, sixty years before the Revolution, *A Londres Liberté et Egalité*. The coat-of-arms of the museum at Bordeaux, engraved in 1783, bears the motto *Liberté, Egalité*, no doubt in honour of Montesquieu, the great glory of the Bordelais. Thus *Fraternité* alone of the three national virtues owes its legend entirely to the Revolution.

the relations of the human race which concern the home and the family they set an example to us. The love for a mother is not the life-long religion of an Englishman as it is of a Frenchman. The affection is mutual, and the tenderness of the French of all classes for their offspring is perhaps so excessive as to be injurious to the robustness of the race. But one result is that the local tribunals have rarely in France to try an offence corresponding to that which in England is known as leaving parents chargeable to the parish. Nor has the French language a technical equivalent for the term "wife-beating"; and if Frenchmen sometimes widow themselves by swifter means, they are as a rule the most humane of husbands.

The French, again, are capable of making sentimental sacrifices for the benefit of oppressed nationalities. Under the Monarchy of July and the Second Empire they would have gladly taken up arms to succour Poland. The ills they suffered in the war with Prussia have had a too overwhelming effect to allow them to think much of the grievances of other peoples. Nevertheless we have seen the Foreign Minister who has done most credit to the Republic narrowly escape rejection at the Académie Française, because he was deemed to have neglected the plaint of Greece at the bidding of Russia. With the exception of the curious relations between the Muscovite Autocracy and the Republic, the attitude of the French towards great powers has at the end of the century presented no abnormal features. The rivalries of war and of peace have naturally affected the French in their feelings toward several of their neighbours in Europe; and at an epoch when the fraternal effusions of peoples are trammelled by their bristling coats of armour it is pertinent to ask which is the nationality whose members Frenchmen regard with most asperity.

Are they the Germans across the Rhine? The memory of the invader marching in triumph through Paris, after making himself Emperor in the palace of Louis XIV. by right of victory over France, galls those who saw those days of sorrow. But a

and opening the way for his transformation of the character of the Revolution. It was then that Marie-Joseph Chénier celebrated in song the "Reprise de Toulon." A few months later he composed the famous "Chant du Départ," a poem interesting to peruse, as its spirited stanzas are animated by the conflicting sentiments which inspired the movements of the Revolution—animosity against certain categories of Frenchmen, and opposition to the alien foe.

Whenever Frenchmen at the end of the nineteenth century are moved to belabour one another in the discussion of public questions, their mutual malevolence cannot, of course, be ascribed to the direct influence of the humanitarian philosophy which preceded, or to the violence which accompanied the Revolution. When, for example, in the quarrel just mentioned between French explorers, the elder declared that his high-born compatriot was a creature not superior to his Abyssinian negro, this was only by accident an exposition of the doctrine of Rousseau.¹ So when a Republican journalist, wishing to disparage a minister of the Republic, charges him with once having followed a degrading trade, or with having committed offences which, if brought to justice, would be tried with closed doors, the resemblance in sound of his language to the scurrility of Marat in the *Ami du Peuple* is unstudied. But in these and similar cases the bitterness of Frenchmen for Frenchmen may be traced to the period when the principle of Fraternity was officially enunciated. French people then acquired the habit, never since lost, of regarding all political controversy as a desperate struggle between irreconcilable elements, in which every lethal weapon was lawful to use, and all ties of racial kinship were to be ignored.

We need refer to the cruel annals of the Revolution only when they illustrate a phenomenon of the present day; as ever since Napoleon ceased to direct French ardour against the foreign foe, the century has presented a series of blood-stained pictures, of which the subject is the slaying of Frenchmen by Frenchmen as an incident of political divergency. M.

¹ *Figaro*, March 29, 1897.

Emmanuel Arago, who lived to be an Ambassador of the Republic in the last decade of the century, was the son of the great astronomer, and passed his childhood at the Observatory near the garden of the Luxembourg. There his earliest emotion was hearing the sound of musketry on a winter's morning, when Marshal Ney was shot by French soldiers, after leading to victory the armies of France with sublime courage for twenty-five years before his forlorn heroism at Waterloo. The aged diplomatist had many a similar reminiscence of the history of his countrymen. The White Terror in the provinces exceeded in ruthless destruction of French lives the executions in the capital of warriors of the Empire. The Government of the Restoration, under which French people were thus put to death, itself came to a violent end in the Three Glorious Days of July. A lofty column, where the Bastille once stood, now commemorates how Frenchmen died wholesale by French hands on that felicitous occasion. When the nation wearied of Louis Philippe, who derived the chief profit from the Revolution of 1830, it got rid of him with less bloodshed than attended his accession. Only a score or two of French corpses strewed the streets to mark the end of the Orleans dynasty. Four months later new proof was shown that for the mutual slaughter of the people of France no regime was more favourable than a Republic, when in the Days of June 1848 five thousand Parisians were despatched by their compatriots. After that the cannon and the rifles with which Louis Napoleon cleared the boulevards of his unsympathetic fellow-citizens in December 1851, may be deemed to have merely fired the customary salute wherewith new methods of government are announced in France.

Warfare, even in its civilised guise, brings out all the evil passions of human nature. *Homo homini lupus* is as true in our day as when the nations of Europe were semi-barbarous tribes. But most modern peoples reserve the latent savagery within them for the chastisement of their enemies abroad ; whereas the French show themselves most inhuman in fratricidal strife, as though to substitute for the old aphorism a new version, *Gallus Gallo lupus*. In time of war the French show generosity to foreign foes ; but

when Gaul meets Gaul, quarter is neither given nor expected. Thus the conflict between France and Prussia in 1870, desperate as it was, was not stained by deeds of truculence. But when the Germans were resting after their victory on the heights around Paris, Parisians, to show them that a triumphant invader did not stand deepest in their hate, made a bonfire of the noblest monuments of their capital as a spectacle for the conqueror, and amid its fumes massacred venerable and peaceful citizens of France. The insurrection of the Commune was one of the blackest crimes known to history, and merited the sternest retribution. Yet its wickedness would have been a more salutary lesson for future generations had it been punished with less retaliatory ferocity. The dire occasion did not admit of judicial calmness. The infamy of the provocation offered by the insurgents was unparalleled. Nevertheless the soberest narrative of the suppression of the rebellion proves that Frenchmen meted out to Frenchmen penalty so ruthless, so exuberant, and so indiscriminate that other Europeans in modern warfare only inflict the like on barbaric races. The cruelty of the Communards to their fellow-citizens was as dastardly as that of the Sepoys to the British at Cawnpore. The punishment inflicted by the Versailles troops on the Parisians during the *Semaine de Mai* was as merciless as that with which the English in India had to stamp out the Mutiny.

It might be urged that Civil War, being fratricidal, calls forth inhuman passions, were it not that a few years earlier the War of Secession in America had shown that there are modern peoples which can engage in bitter internecine conflict unaggravated by cruelty. As the French do not thus conduct their civil conflicts, the events of May 1871 ought to have taught them to forget, save as a warning, every occasion on which French blood has been shed by French hands. That, however, was not the tradition inculcated on the children born amid the carnage exhibited to the complacent Germans,—who had not left so many French corpses at Gravelotte, or even at Sedan, as fell by French hands during the epilogue to their victories. That generation grew up to keep as the national holiday the anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille,

which, if a triumph for liberty, was also the occasion of the slaughter of Frenchmen by Frenchmen. There were great days in 1789, unstained with French blood, which the nation might have joined to celebrate. The Oath in the Tennis Court at Versailles on the 20th of June, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man on the 20th of August, are dates as fitting for popular festival as the 14th of July, and are unsullied with the death of a single French citizen. But when the centenary of the Revolution arrived, it was clear that its apostles were imbued with its relentless spirit; for they clamoured for commemoration of more days on which French had slain French. Pressure was put upon the Government, on August 10, 1892, to fête the Sack of the Tuileries. A few weeks later, when the Municipal Council of Paris celebrated the centenary of the formal abolition of Royalty, little disguise was made that the rejoicings were in honour of the Massacres of September 1792. A statue was decreed for Danton. It stands between the site of the Abbaye, where the carnage began, and the École de Médecine, where the science of saving life is now taught. The irony of the locality was unnoticed amid the debate aroused as to Danton's responsibility for the Massacres in the Prisons. It clearly showed that whatever his real share in them, his admirers would not have wished to honour him in bronze had they not firmly believed that he abetted the butchery of the thousand French men, women, and children who died with the Princess de Lamballe. Any doubt about it was dissipated five years later when the same municipality proposed a statue for Marat, who represented no principles in the Revolution but those of delation, and of murder of French people.

We may notice a curious fact which perhaps proves the superior happiness of our domestic history rather than the superiority of the British temperament. It is, that while the French perpetuate their internal strife by celebrating the days on which they shed the blood of their compatriots, the historical anniversaries which we have kept as holidays commemorated the saving of English lives, and not their extinction. There was Royal Oak Day, in honour of the preservation of the not

very valuable life of Charles II. at Boscobel; and there was the Fifth of November, which solemnised the escape from Gunpowder Plot of the Houses of Parliament. With regard to the latter festival, however, it may be open to doubt if in any modern community the deliverance from destruction of its legislative bodies would now be deemed a benefit sufficiently precious to justify its inscription in a ferial calendar.

The unbrotherly tradition of the Revolution has entered into the domain of art, which ought not needlessly to be disfigured with images of fratricide. The French have reason to be proud of the gallery of the Luxembourg, where, in an age barren of art in many lands, France is seen to be still the nursery of artistic instinct—which keeps it, in spite of its politicians, in the front rank of nations. Many of the canvases there of contemporary painters inspire patriotism as well as admiration. Such are Detaille's stirring war-scenes; Bonnat's glowing effigy of Cardinal Lavigerie, the foremost of French colonists; Jules Breton's peasants, the solid basis of French prosperity. But there is one conspicuous picture of which the casual visitor, whether native or alien, can perceive only the horror. It represents an agonised little boy in cavalry uniform, unhorsed and stabbed to death by men armed with bayonets and pikes. It bears no explanatory inscription, and all that is manifest from the costumes is that three stalwart Frenchmen are slaughtering a defenceless French child. That, indeed, is the subject chosen by the artist to hand down to future ages. The painting delineates the legendary death in the Vendean War of the young Barra, whose name occurs in the *Chant du Départ*, as he was said to have been killed by the Royalists for crying "Vive la République." The legend is as impossible to substantiate as the more heroic tale of the son of Lucien Casa-Bianca, deputy for Corsica in the Convention, who perished five years later at Aboukir; but if it were as edifying as that of the victim of the explosion on the *Orient*, there would be no harm in perpetuating it. It is, however, a story, the currency of which falsifies history, for the presumable purpose of proclaiming that the

murder of children by Frenchmen is a normal incident of French civil disturbance.

The calumny in this case is so unjust that a stranger may be allowed to challenge it. In all the blood-stained records of the Revolution even revolutionary authorities recognise the humane conduct of the Vendéans in defending their hearths and altars, till the diabolical cruelty of Westermann's Infernal Column, and of other Republican forces, provoked reprisals.¹ If, therefore, it could be authentically proved that young Barra's death took place as described in Revolutionary poetry, it would still be an exceptional incident not characteristic of the Vendean war. Thus, a picture like this is a wanton presentment of French cruelty to the French. The authorities who exposed it seem to have reasoned that the public which came to the Luxembourg consisted largely of foreigners who had an idea that the atrocities which stain the domestic history of France, from the Terror to the Commune, were chiefly the work of Revolutionaries; that they had vaguely heard of the young and the aged being done to death in the name of Fraternity, from the boys and girls butchered at Bicêtre in the massacres of 1792 to Archbishop Darboy shot in 1871. It was therefore necessary to advertise the fact that savagery of this kind was not confined to one party in the State, but that *Gallus Gallo lupus* was a general proposition applicable to the whole race. Otherwise, why should a noble gallery be defaced with the delineation of a cowardly crime of Frenchmen based on a mere legend? It is not as

¹ e.g. Mme. de Stael, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, partie 3, c. xvii. As to the cruelty of the Republicans to the Vendéans, there is no lack of Republican evidence. In an *Adresse du comité de surveillance révolutionnaire de Fontenay-le-Peuple à la Convention*, the following report was made on the conduct of a Republican chief in that picturesque town, which has since regained its pre-Revolutionary name of Fontenay-la-Comte: "We see him every day catching any children he happens to meet, whether their parents are Republicans or Brigands. [It was thus that the Republicans called the Royalists of the West.] He seizes them by one leg and slices them in two, just like a butcher splitting up a sheep." Marceau himself, after helping to win the battle of Le Mans in 1793 over the Vendéans, wrote to his sister, declining her congratulations on the victory, because, he said, his laurels were stained with the blood of his countrymen. The outrages on the vanquished in that battle were extended pitilessly to women, as related by a less dispassionate authority, Amédée de Bejarry, son of the Vendean leader, in his *Souvenirs*, published at Nantes in 1860.

though the Revolutionary period was not abundant in incidents worthy to inspire the patriotic genius of artists, as testify a hundred famous paintings. There is "Rouget de Lisle singing the Marseillaise at Strasbourg," by Pils, at the Louvre; the "Enrolment of the Volunteers of 1792," by Couder, at Versailles; to say nothing of the series of military scenes by Gros, who was with Bonaparte in the Army of Italy, and by Carle Vernet, who handed on the graphic gifts of his family to his son Horace, born the year of the Revolution. Or if modern Republican art sought a praiseworthy subject from the pitiful annals of the Vendean campaign, it might depict the humanity of Marceau, who, when he died at twenty-seven a General of five years' standing, unlike his colleagues in the war against the Royalists of the West, left a memory unsullied by cruelty to his fellow-countrymen.

The perpetuation of such legends in pictorial art is only a symptom of the unfraternal tradition which the Revolution rooted in France. It is not a powerful influence to diffuse it. The tone of the press, however, shows how widespread is the evil of which it is a disseminating agency. The *Journal des Débats* and the *Temps*, which both support the principles of 1789, are unsurpassed in Europe for the propriety and moderation of their domestic polemics. In certain other organs political articles sometimes appear signed by pens as refined as they are eloquent. But in the cheap journals of widest circulation, controversy is usually conducted in gross language, laden with base allusions to opponents. A stranger travelling in France, setting out from Paris, buys at the station an armful of morning papers. He might gather from their perusal, before the express train has made its first halt, that the population of the land through which he is speeding is wholly composed of the ignoble and the fatuous, who spend their lives in rancorous strife, for which the cure is known only to the sole saviours of society—the raging prophets of the press and the tribune. The traveller, confused with crude epithets not found in the dictionary of the French Academy, would do well to raise his eyes from the envenomed sheet. Superficial though the view of the country be from the window

of a railway carriage, he will discern things belying the infuinate print before he reaches the noble spires of Chartres, or Orleans with its memories of Frenchmen united against a foe from the days of Joan of Arc to the campaign of the Loire in 1870, or Rouen, where two sublime minsters tower above the busy factory smoke ; cities whose associations of patriotic defence, of worship and of industry take the imagination away from the sordid brawl of politics. He will see the peasant at work in the cornfields of the Beauce or in the pastures of Normandy ; or if it be a Sunday, he will catch a glimpse of villagers making holiday, blithe, sociable, and sober. No doubt the lives of all these people at work or at play are not of ideal amenity, and human passion is troublous in the provinces as well as in the agitated capital. At the same time, they are for the most part indifferent to political contention. So at the end of the century, of which one of the boasted triumphs is a cheap press, it has to be avowed that a most salutary feature of national life in France is that a large proportion of the people of all classes never read the newspapers.

It is not my intention to quote any of the appalling terms which, applied by politicians to one another, meet the eye perusing a journal in search of news. Nor will I give examples of the infamous charges brought against opponents as a daily incident of political controversy. All that shall be noted here is one lamentable effect of the discussion of public topics,—a heartless callousness before personal affliction, or even mortal bereavement. Sickness and death in France usually bring forth the tenderest of human sentiments, and move mere spectators of sorrow to express compassion. The popular political press is above such sentimentality. Not only are Republicans cruel to Monarchists, or Reactionaries to Radicals ; so inherent has cruelty grown in all French polemics that a temporary divergency will bring down upon a former friend rancour which would be excessive to pour upon a lifelong enemy.

The *Libre Parole*, primarily an anti-Semitic organ, professes devotion to the Church, and is one of the few Parisian journals read by the country clergy. Its editor, M. Drumont, whose

writings on uncontroversial subjects show that a literary talent of great charm has been sacrificed to the furies of polemical journalism, attacks indiscriminately all who differ from him. No Frenchman has more claim on the respect of Catholics than M. de Mun ; but he supported the Government of the Republic in certain legislation, provoked by the outrages of anarchists, which was not agreeable to M. Drumont. Soon afterwards, being stricken with illness which seemed beyond cure, this is what the rural priests read of their most devoted defender from a Catholic pen : " God has heard our complaints, and has sternly smitten de Mun ; He has said to him, ' I gave thee eloquence, and thou hast kept silence when men were waiting to salute thee as the champion of justice. Thou shalt never speak again.' " ¹ M. de Mun's lips happily recovered their eloquence, which was crowned with the highest honour France has to confer on a Frenchman. Just two years ² after the utterance of this savage blast of fanaticism he was elected to the Academy in succession to M. Jules Simon, who in good taste, tolerance, and amenity had illustrated the craft of journalism.

In the latter days of that veteran, who had fought in many a political field, it was a pleasure to turn to his genial contributions to the press. They demonstrated a fact which modern French journalists and politicians should take to heart. Their flexible native language as a weapon of attack is more formidable when manipulated with grace and irony than when it is used as an instrument of barbarous warfare to bludgeon or to rip up an adversary. To exult or to gibe over an open grave is assuredly worthier of a savage tribe than of the French nation, which in its domestic life has an exemplary cult for the quiet dead. The death of M. Carnot, doing his duty as a dignified Chief of the State, moved Europe to tears. Yet on the day of his burial M. de Cassagnac hailed the funeral procession with sneers. With audacity ill placed in a Bonapartist, he said that the Church of Notre Dame, where Napoleon had publicly flouted the Vicar of Christ, was desecrated by the solemn obsequies sung over the

¹ *Libre Parole*, 6 Avril 1895.

² April 1, 1897.

remains of the murdered President.¹ If Catholics are unfeeling in the presence of death, more reverent charity need not be expected from professors of irreligion. So when a pious priest of the diocese of Paris was slain by a mad woman the organ of the Socialists suggested a base reason for the crime; though the victim was an example of self-denial and ascetic devotion, being a rare instance of a Frenchman of high birth in the orders of the secular clergy.² But while the humblest workman in France salutes the lifeless body of a stranger borne past him to the tomb, this is not the practice of politicians before the remains of those whose opinions they dislike. Even in the bosom of the Republican family like unseemliness is displayed. When M. Jules Ferry died, on the morrow of his election to a post which requited his long exclusion from office, it was not the priests and nuns, persecuted by him in the days of his power, who made signs of joy. It was the anti-clerical Radicals who most loudly exulted. One of them, M. Clovis Hugues, a poet in his hours, thus celebrated the event in crudest prose: "Yesterday all-powerful, to-day Jules Ferry is but a corpse which the people have the right to execrate, and to-morrow the worms will eat him just as he had us eaten up by the Versailles troops in 1871."³

It was thus that the Carmagnole was joyfully danced and sung in Paris during the Massacres of September 1792. The song and the dance went on all through the Terror, and the chief effect of the Revolution on the national temperament would have been to make Frenchmen rejoice at the woes of Frenchmen, had not the foreign invader imposed on them the wholesome discipline of war. Consequently out of the same violent movement which has left a heritage of hate and strife to the nation came the modern idea of patriotism in France, which is a senti-

¹ *Autorité*, 1-2 Juillet, 1894.

² *Petite République*, 13 Mai 1895,—on the murder of the Abbé Paul de Broglie, brother of the Duc de Broglie, and grandson of Mme. de Stael.

³ Twenty-second anniversary of the Commune, celebrated at the Maison du Peuple, Paris, March 18, 1893, the day after the death of M. Ferry, which occurred just after his election to the Presidency of the Senate, eight years after his dismissal from office in 1885.

ment both generous and sincere. Its existence side by side with internecine dissension, which after a century shows little sign of abating, is one of the many paradoxes encountered in the study of French character, and is a result of the abnormal nature of the great upheaval.

II

The French form of the word patriot is not in its familiar sense of ancient usage. St. Simon thus applied it to Vauban, but previously it was a synonym of compatriot. In that sense Rousseau continued to use it; though by his time the Encyclopædists had out of it constructed the word *patriotisme* to connote *amour de la patrie*. Until the Revolution, however, that sentiment was associated with the idea of loyalty to the crown, or even to the person of the sovereign. The kings had made France. For eight centuries, by marriage, conquest, or heritage the fabric of France was built up by its monarchs. They were the liberators of the territory from the English, the Spaniard, and the Pope, turn by turn, and had consolidated the kingdom by absorbing the independent domains of Brittany, Burgundy, and Provence. Thus the first Emigration (unlike the second, which was a more justifiable flight from death after the throne was upset in 1792) has been judged perhaps more harshly than it merited. The feeling that patriotism signified the cause of the King was so strong among the nobles that, in crossing the frontier and in joining the Prussian or the Austrian to fight the revolutionary levies of France, they believed that they were doing their duty as good Frenchmen; though they gave the impression that they were leaving in the lurch their sovereigns, whose fate was aggravated by their action. Moreover, the troops which they and their fathers had commanded in battles won or lost for France were often foreign mercenaries. This system kept up the idea that it was as a personal service to the king that they offered their lives. No officers were more intrepid in the field than they; but it was as valiant domestics of the royal household that they went to fight, paid by privileges, but not allowed to

take any part in the affairs of their country. Thus servitude became the badge of the nobility, which was not an aristocracy, as it represented no interests in the nation outside the institution of royalty. It was this curious conception of their position which prompted large numbers of the nobles to rally to Napoleon when he opened the gates of France to them. Madame de Staël relates that when the bearer of one of the noblest names of the ancient court was reproached for accepting the office of chamberlain to the usurper of the throne of his king by divine right, he replied : "What would you have me do? One must serve somebody." ¹

The Emigration, which aggravated the feeling of the Revolutionaries against the invaders of France, was one of the strongest factors in the evolution of the patriotic sentiment which came into being at that period. The deputies of the States-General formed the first Assembly which in France had been animated with a national sentiment to the exclusion of all provincial distinction. When the fête of the Federation took place a year after the Fall of the Bastille, when Talleyrand for the last time publicly pontificated as a bishop, the fact that the King's brother, with a crowd of the nobility, was plotting with the foreigner across the frontier, inspired most of those who took part in the ceremony, with a feeling entirely new to French hearts. Thus was the *patrie* founded and consecrated. Then the first battalions which marched against the invasion were specially invested with the name of "patriot," and we have noticed the beneficent effect which that movement had on the spirit of the Revolution. At the same time, the idea of Patriotism did not become clearly defined as a sentiment to be directed against the foreigner. The Vendean insurrection, though the uprising of the West was abetted from outside, was a civil war ; and the name of "patriot" assumed in it by the Republicans became merely the title of one of the contending factions.

The end of it all was that the idea of patriotism, which took its rise under circumstances abnormal and unprecedented, amid

¹ *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, partie IV. c. II.

the conflicting turmoil of foreign invasion, revolution, anarchy, and civil war, became a territorial rather than a racial sentiment. The opposite phenomenon is found in our country. A Briton, while he has an abstract reverence for the island of his origin, has rarely the clinging attachment to its soil which a Frenchman has to the land of France ; but he is less harsh to the men of his own race, in the destiny of which, established in no matter what quarter of the globe, he has a profound belief.

It is worthy of notice, in this enquiry into the relations of the Revolution with Modern France, that the French idea of patriotism, developed in the last decade of the eighteenth century, is that which subsists still in France. Whereas the British conception of patriotism has undergone a complete change in the intervening hundred years, having been modified by the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon race, and by the general march of civilisation. The instances quoted in these pages show that at the present day Frenchmen, when divided on political questions, are as cruel to one another as ever ; while it is probable that their affection for the soil of France is deeper than at any previous period. The mourning for the loss of Alsace and Lorraine has not been merely the wail of wounded national vanity. Nor did it chiefly spring from regret for the lost populations, for as for the Alsacians, France took little pains to ungermanise them in language and in education when they were French subjects. The sorrow of the French is that two fair provinces, with their mountains and vineyards and towns, and above all with the left bank of the Rhine, should no longer form part of the soil of France. To live on the tract of Europe bearing that name is in a Frenchman's eyes the greatest of human privileges—so great that he shrinks from practical ideas of colonial aggrandisement which can only be purchased at the price of exile from France.

At industrial exhibitions in French cities charts of the world are exposed to illustrate the produce of the colonies. On them the possessions of France are marked with vivid colour, so bountifully spread that an usher from the local Lycée conducting his ingenuous troop to be impressed with the enterprise of France

might, with the untravelled aptness of a map-making school-master, exclaim—

Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?

But if the draughtsman had added to each painted area the number of French settlers inhabiting it, the statistics would show that for the purpose of the expansion of the Gallic race, France might as well claim dominion over the Polar Regions as over some of its nominal possessions. Even in Algeria, at the gates of France, less distant from Provence than is Normandy, a sparse French population discontentedly neglects the riches of a splendid heritage, ever gazing over the Mediterranean in the hope of regaining its native shores.

No doubt the longing which expatriated Frenchmen have for their country is less due to any theory of patriotism evolved at the Revolution than to the amenity of France as a land to live in. There is indeed no portion of the earth's surface so favoured by nature. Its climates are genial. The products of its picturesque soil are as rich as they are varied; and its offspring are endowed not only with the instinct of making the best use of them, but with the means of enjoying them, which a wide dispersion of wealth permits. The comparative inclemency of the British sky is not the sole reason why Britons have a less affection for the home of their race than have the French for theirs. Yet we have all known Australians and other colonists, of exemplary loyalty to the Crown of England, who after a brief sojourn within their revisited native shores, spent in carpings at the fogs which enshroud them, depart again ill-content to end their days elsewhere than in their unforced exile. Our Indian story, however, shows that Englishmen have not built up the Empire merely as epicures of climate. Moreover, when we were laying its foundations both in the East and in the West the French were our active rivals from the Hoogley, where they retain an outpost, to the St. Lawrence, where their language still is spoken,—though at that time more self-denial and courage were demanded of colonists than now.

The evaporation in France of the colonising spirit, and the increase of that unimperial form of patriotism manifested in a clinging to the cradle of the race, may be ascribed to the material results of the Revolution and of the subsequent resettlement. France was made a pleasanter abode for the multitude by the abolition of the fiscal burdens which ground the joy of life out of the humble. Then again by going beyond the suppression of primogeniture, in denying testamentary liberty to citizens, the New Regime secured to the great majority competence to enjoy the bountiful products of the land. Similar restrictions on the power of testators would not have the same effect in our country. Laws which regulate the making of wills affect only those members of the community who have property to bequeath; and not a large proportion of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom would be better off if parents were prevented by law from disinheriting any of their progeny. In France the national virtue of thrift tends to make every one a capitalist; and the fact that down to a low social level few marriages are contracted without dowry, shows how widely diffused are riches among all classes. Even before the Revolution the people were thrifty. Their devices to hide from the rapacious tax-gatherer the hoards which they devoted to the purchase of land sharpened the quality. The combination of thrift with the system of forced testamentary division of property has for its result the possession of independent fortune by a large proportion of the population. Hence the men of various categories who in the nineteenth century have gone forth from the British Isles to build up an Empire beyond the seas have in France had new motives for staying at home,—from the cadets of our rich families who, dissatisfied with straitened existence on the pittance of younger sons, were the first pioneers of some of our most thriving settlements, to the superfluous offspring of our villages and towns who emigrated to escape pauperism in the mother-country. Thus the popular advantages which France offers as a land of residence restrain its colonising forces, and tend to restrict the genius of the French race to a tract of European ground no larger than that which it filled two centuries ago.

This diffusion of unambitious comfort has another drawback. As the revenue from the modest heritage which falls to most Frenchmen needs only a small supplement to suffice for the support of a family, an ever-increasing number of the male population wish to be in the salaried service of the State. Consequently the army of functionaries, always numerous under a centralised government, is further swollen by the place-seeking demands of the population. A wasteful drain on the resources of the country is thus encouraged, slenderly remunerated but needless posts being created wholesale at the expense of the tax-payers. Another disadvantage of the testamentary law is that its operation after several generations has caused such an excessive subdivision of landed property that peasant proprietors meet the inevitable difficulty by limiting the number of their children. This is the cause of the shrinking birth-rate of France, which is a further check on colonial enterprise, and in the days of universal conscription on the Continent is a menace to French security in the face of the steady growth of the armed nation beyond the Vosges.

If an era of peace had arrived, and if to inhabit in material comfort a genial and abundant tract of Europe secured greatness for a nation, the situation of the French would be more enviable than it is. But in the century which has diffused well-being in France, Europe has ceased to be the uncontested centre of gravity of the human race, and the French have profited less than other civilised and intelligent peoples from the improved means of communication which have effected the change. They use the ocean-going steamers for the transport of their merchandise. They multiply their custom-houses in Asia and in Africa to mark their so-called colonies. Yet, for the conveyance of men and women over the surface of the globe, the passenger ships, even those which float the French flag, would be lightly freighted were it not for Americans who cross the Atlantic and English who sail the Eastern seas. For there are few sea-going travellers from France save reluctant functionaries and more eager soldiers, the chief agents of French colonisation.

It is not merely to extend the British Empire that our countrymen utilise modern means of locomotion. We have the temperament of migratory travel. Our particular sentiment of patriotism, inspired by race rather than by locality, makes us facile settlers in foreign lands, whither we carry some of our native habits and all our native allegiance. An Englishman whose occupation forces him to live abroad, is never an object of commiseration to his friends at home if the climate of his domicile be agreeable, as is a Frenchman under similar circumstances. Indeed, an increasing number of our wealthy class voluntarily spend half of the year on the Continent, often establishing luxurious homes on alien territory favoured by the sun. There are distinguished servants of the British crown who, having been employed for years beyond the seas, do not hasten back to the scenes of their youth when their work is done, but prefer to grow old in tasting the joys of a novel foreign residence. This is incomprehensible to the French. A Frenchman who has served his country abroad with distinction as an ambassador or in other high posts enjoys lamentably little social consideration at home. Yet such is the longing of every Gaul to feel under his feet the soil of France, that brilliant careers have been prematurely exchanged for obscurity to satisfy that fancy.

Time will show whether this sentimental growth of a hundred years will be for the eventual glory of France. The idea is admirable and worthy of all sympathy, but it seems to have been developed rather too late in the history of civilisation. Rapid communication is more stimulating to racial than to local patriotism. Yet the love of Frenchmen for their mother soil has reached its intensity in the century which has put Acadia and other lost over-sea possessions of France within nearer reach of Paris than was Albi when the explorer La Pérouse was born there under Louis XV. or Marseilles and Brest when Barras sailed from those ports to India. It was then that the future Director saw France losing its last chances¹ of founding an

¹ Barras' two voyages to India were commenced in 1776 and in 1781. On the latter occasion, he sailed from Brest with the famous *Bailli de Suffren* on

Oriental empire, before he finally settled in his native land to help endow it with the Revolution and its sedentary after-consequences.

III

Patriotism of the soil would also seem to need as its complement, to make it more effective for the elevation of France, a greater harmony among Frenchmen at moments of national misfortune. Patriotism ought then to display itself as a virtue rising high above party strife; and French critics have flattered us by comparing the calm of the English people with the passionate emotion of their own fellow-countrymen on such occasions.¹ The fall of Khartoum was humiliating for British pride. But the news of it, though bitterly deplored, caused no paroxysm of frenzy in England as did in France, a few weeks later, the tidings of the French reverse at Lang-Son, when, amid a scene of wild fury in the Chamber, M. Jules Ferry was chased eternally from office, while the raging mob outside clamoured to throw him into the Seine. Although ministers held responsible, justly or unjustly, for disasters are not thus treated in our country, the envying contrast which French publicists draw should not fill us with a complacent sense of superiority. It should rather make us thankful that our domestic history has been of a nature to enable us to cultivate an imperturbable spirit during many generations. It was not always so.

The tendency to make scapegoats of public men is incidental to a state of unsettled government. The most celebrated victim

the expedition which French authorities say would have ended in the destruction of British domination in India but for the peace of 1783. Talleyrand, who lived to see the railway introduced in France, relates that in 1766 he took seventeen days to go from near Angoulême to Paris in the fast Bordeaux mail-coach, the time now of a voyage from France to India.

¹ In the *Année Politique* for 1885, edited by André Daniel (M. André Lebon, afterwards Minister of Commerce and of the Colonies), the following occurs: "L'attitude du Parlement français devant l'incident de Lang-Son fut d'autant plus attristante qu'au même moment le Parlement anglais avait sonné un admirable exemple de sang-froid en présence de difficultés de tous points comparables à celles du Tonkin." M. Gaston Deschamps and M. Sarcey, among other eminent French writers, have paid similar compliments to the attitude of England at such crises.

of that type in modern times was an Englishman, whose fate was made immortal by a French epigram. When *Candide* crossed the Channel to compare English insanity with that of other nations, the first sight which met his eyes was a British officer being shot with solemnity by British soldiers on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war; and he was informed that in England it was thought a good thing from time to time to put to death an admiral to encourage the others.¹ Yet Voltaire, who thus stigmatised the sacrifice of the ill-starred Byng, was in his strictures usually more merciful to England than to France. In the half-century before the French Revolution, for which Voltaire was preparing the way, amid all the admiration excited by the comparative liberty enjoyed under the British Constitution, continental observers did not regard our kingdom as a pattern of settled government. No doubt when, in 1756, to obtain the death of Admiral Byng for an error of judgment, the people were inflamed to madness, the city of London calling for vengeance, and the cry being echoed from every corner of the realm,² the Hanoverian succession was practically established. But only a few years previously, before the '45 scattered the hopes of the Jacobites, another intelligent Frenchman, younger than Voltaire, thus discussed the chances of the Old Pretender, whom he saw at Rome, though he did not impress him favourably. "It is not possible for him," wrote Charles de Brosses in 1740, "to give up all hopes of recovering the crown of a country so given to revolutions. . . . The spirit of the English nation is to hate the ruling monarch, be he whom he may."³ To France in the nineteenth century might be applied the judgment which the president of the Parliament of Dijon passed upon England at the moment when

¹ *Candide*, c. xxiii.

² Macaulay, in his essay on Thackeray's *History of the Earl of Chatham*, says of the year in which Byng was shot: "At this time appeared Brown's *Estimate*, a book universally read, admired, and believed. The author convinced his readers that they were a race of cowards and scoundrels: that nothing could save them." This is quite the tone of French pessimists of the end of the nineteenth century, when the sentiment which sacrificed Byng is rife in France.

³ *Letters of De Brosses*, Translated by Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, xxi. (*Lettres familières écrites d'Italie en 1739 et 1740 par Charles de Brosses: Lettre xl. éd. de 1869*).

the House of Brunswick had occupied the throne the same space of time which the Third Republic had survived in the sixtieth year of Queen Victoria.

The Third Republic will not be as durable as the Hanoverian dynasty ; but if any settled regime could only last in France the span of one of the sexagenarian reigns of monarchs of that line it would be an unbounded blessing to the country. Not that long reigns are of auspicious tradition in France. When that of Louis XV. ended a hundred and thirty-one years after the accession of his immediate predecessor, the administration of the land was so evil that all the glories of the Age, won by the French in art, letters, and arms, could not countervail the menacing discontent, which indeed was encouraged by the literary prodigies of the later period. It was not the length of the reigns of Louis XIV. and of his great-grandson which produced the splendour of the Grand Siècle. It was the stability of the ancient Monarchy which gave the genius of the people its opportunity to fructify. The prolonged sway of a strong and respected ruler would no doubt be beneficent for France ; but such benefits are not at the beck of human societies. Modern democracies have, however, the choice of the regime under which they will be governed, and it is within the power of the people of France to disembarass themselves of one untoward heritage of the Revolution—unstable government.

The forms which it has taken under the Third Republic will be carefully examined in the following pages. Here the general observation may be made that the spirit of the nation is opposed to the idea expressed in the word "improvisation," which, now a political term in daily use, till this century had no place in the French language, excepting to describe the Italian facility of making unprepared a poem or a speech. In spite of the ebullient element in the French nature, which in troublous times bursts out with ferocity, and in diversion takes the form of excessive blitheness,—in spite of the qualities which induced M. Taine in a misanthropic passage to liken the vagaries of his countrymen to the antics of monkeys,¹ —there are no creatures

¹ "L'homme est un animal très voisin du singe. . . . De là en lui un fonds

of the human species so orderly and so methodical as the French. In the private life of the people, their thrift, their care in keeping accounts, their skill in organising simple pleasures in the intervals of toil, the neat attire of the women, the formality and good service of the meals even in humble homes, all testify to a provident and systematic temperament inconsistent with improvisation. The habit of thought of the French is equally opposed to it. They are wont instinctively to classify and to formulate their ideas, and the educational training of all grades fosters this tendency. An English priest, once attached to the diocese of Paris, told me how impressed he was with the contrast of the confessions in the two countries of young girls before the age when the sacrament is a psychological revelation or a perfunctory routine. The youthful English penitent told a tale which had neither beginning nor end, tangled and unreflecting. The French child unfolded a calmly prepared theme, a model of lucid symmetry, in which all that had to be said was arranged under precise categories.

The same systematic disposition the French like to see and to feel in their government. Their propensity is not to improvise, but to "hierarchise." So, side by side with the Parliamentary Republic, of which every President has abdicated save one who was murdered, and under which a minister who retains his portfolio for a year is a curiosity, subsists a series of stable official hierarchies, administrative, ecclesiastical, military, and judicial, which incarnate the spirit of the nation. The secret of the completeness of Napoleon's domination over the French, and of his ability to reconstruct France, in evolving order out of the chaos of the Revolution, was that he recognised the needs and the qualities of the nation. His warlike genius gave him authority and opportunity; but his civil edifice would have been swept away with his conquests and his dynasty had he not been animated with the spirit of the nation he was called to rule and

persistant de brutalité, de férocité, d'instincts violents et destructeurs, auxquels s'ajoutent, s'il est Français, la gaieté, le rire et le plus étrange besoin de gambader, de polissonner au milieu des dégâts qu'il fait."—*Ancien Régime*, livre iii. c. iv. 3.

¹ Written before the tragic death of M. Faure in 1899.

to reconstitute. His severest judge of our time, M. Taine, has described his mind as divided into "three atlases." The first was military, the second administrative, and the third personal, each mental volume being subdivided into a score of sections, all under methodic headings. Napoleon, when taking a decision on any question of strategy or munitions, of taxes or tribunals, or requiring the character of any individual, had thus only to turn to the marvellous cartulary of his mind, where every subject was classified and docketed. This quality showed that, despite his alien origin, he was the providential reconstructor of France; and no more conspicuous monument of the national disposition has ever been erected than the work in which M. Taine criticises the giant who exemplified and appreciated it. His treatise on the Origins of Contemporary France is itself a masterpiece of classification, proclaiming him a typical example of French intellect, trained to the highest point.

From the philosopher among the National Archives, or in his library at Menthon, analysing and marshalling the elements of the fabric of modern France, to the painstaking functionaries in public offices, tabulating the statistics and reports which facilitate all inquiry into French institutions, the people which willingly submitted to Napoleon's codes and administrative hierarchies are all in different degrees prone to classify and to stereotype. They like to have everything methodically arranged in its place, in their government as in their account-books or in their domestic cupboards. Yet this is the nation which has continually to accept the improvised, where outward forms of government are constantly being renewed, and where unexpected adventure is always imminent. Thus the energetic and passionate side of the national character, which when disciplined has borne France to the front on many a contested field in war and in peace, is kept in a perpetual state of irritation, with the result of internecine strife. It began at the Restoration, made inevitable by the insensate ambition of the great organiser of the Revolution, which tempted him from his constructive work to bring upon France the chastisement of Europe. So, though his administrative

edifice survived him, fitted with its hierarchies suitable to the wants and tastes of the nation, to it was superadded the improvised simulacrum of the British constitution. We shall see in these pages what ills were inflicted on France by the empirical importation of a flimsy copy of a structure slowly piled up by a dissimilar people.

This unnatural state of improvisation is thus a result of the Revolution, which may be held accountable for much of the political ill-temper of the French. As each generation grows up it learns, as the lesson of the century, that whatever regime the country submits to is provisional, and will pass away, to be held up to contumely by those who will succeed it. In a library at Lyons, when looking through an encyclopædia of serious pretensions, under the letter N there met my eye a series of violent lampoons, in the guise of biographies, of the various persons who had borne the name Napoleon. Not only was Louis Napoleon arraigned as a political criminal, but his private life was aspersed, a list of his mistresses was given, and his mother, Queen Hortense, was treated as a frail adventuress. The great Emperor was vilified in the same tone; so to see what this strange instructor of the people had to say of early passages in his life, I turned to the part containing the letter B. In it all the Bonapartes were flattered with adulation as fulsome as the abuse was scurrilous of the Napoleons. Hortense Beauharnais, the wanton of the later volume, was a high-souled princess, as was Pauline Borghese, against whom a fearful insinuation was made under the heading "Napoleon." The explanation was, that the first letters of the alphabet had been dealt with in 1867; whereas the encyclopædists only reached N in 1874, when the Second Empire had been succeeded by the Third Republic. But what a lesson it taught to the youth of France who sought their first ideas in political philosophy in this popular source of instruction! Worse than the scepticism here inculcated was the consecration, as a doctrine, of servile mob-fickleness towards once adulated rulers, which, ever found in all communities, is usually not

made a matter of boast. The treatment inflicted on the twice-fallen dynasty cannot be ascribed to the special wrath roused by the disastrous end of Louis Napoleon's policy. If after Sedan his life was preserved only by his being sent to Germany, in which country he had made as many widows and orphans as in France where he would have been torn to pieces, he enjoyed merely the discipline which other rulers of France had tasted, and which was in store for men of the Republic who proclaimed his downfall. The aged Louis Philippe escaping disguised in a farmer's cart through Normandy to the sea-shore in 1848, and Jules Ferry flying for his life from the people of Paris in 1885, were equally victims of the principle enshrined in the popular encyclopædia. It, in turn, is the outcome of a century of Revolution wherein rulers are only temporary expedients in the nation which of all others needs a strong and stable executive as the complement of the orderly hierarchies of its choice.

None who take part in French public life can help being infected, more or less, with either bitterness or scepticism. Fortunately for the land, it is the latter quality which prevails, and it often takes a genial form. Our English ballad of the Vicar of Bray seems to suggest that the diocese of Oxford could have well dispensed with the incumbency of that divine. It however referred to the period when England was a country where the actual regime was liable to be upset by a revolution; and since 1789 France has been lucky to produce citizens animated with the spirit of the perpetual curate. Such an one was for over fifty years the mayor of a village which I know in the Landes. First appointed by Louis Philippe, he was an Orleanist until the Revolution of February; but before he had time to become a Republican the Coup d'État of 1851 made him an Imperialist. It was only a pleasure deferred, as after the war he became a devoted servant of the Third Republic, and continued so to be, as neither the Comte de Chambord nor General Boulanger succeeded in upsetting it. Such philosophers are the salvation of Revolutionary France.

That their qualities are appreciated was shown in this case, as both when the mayoralty was a government appointment and when it was an elective office, whatever regime was established and whatever the political tendency of the region, he was always chosen to preside over the affairs of his commune. Thus it is that France survives, although for more than a century it has spent its intelligence and its forces in trying to find out under what form of government it had better live. But it is not surprising that an air of pessimism should hang over a nation in which the most salutary symptom is the indifference of the great majority in all matters political.

IV

Besides the irritation induced by the instability of governments, there is another cause, less directly connected with the Revolution, of the ill-conditioned tone of French political controversy at times of public trouble, when internecine strife ought to be hushed instead of being aggravated. The geographical disabilities which affect all continental nations, and from which insular peoples are free, are particularly galling to a high-spirited race; and foreign inroads have become more discomposing to France since its patriotism has been specially inspired by associations of the soil. That sentiment, as we have seen, first took tangible shape under the stress of the invasion during the Revolution. In the epic interval between the first chant of the *Marseillaise* and the desperate interjections of General Cambronne at the last charge of the Old Guard, the armies of France had invaded many lands between the Tagus and the Jordan. But the epoch ended as it began with hostile occupation of French territory. In 1815 and the preceding year the people were so weary of war that the Allies, entering the capital, were hailed as beneficent restorers of peace. So the spectacle of Parisians cheering English redcoats camped in the Bois de Boulogne and Cossacks in the Champs Élysées, or flocking to the Opera to see the

Battle of Waterloo danced as a ballet,¹ gave strangers the impression that in French hearts invasion was not a grievous sore. But this was only the reaction after the removal of a crushing burden from a people of buoyant nature. The phantom of invasion remained ever before the French, from the time when the youthful William of Prussia first entered Paris in the triumphal retinue of his father, who, by the force of his Allies, thus commenced the revenge of Jena, till the day, an aged man, he came back to complete it single-handed, having turned his father's kingdom into an empire in the halls of Versailles.

It was the vision of the son of Frederick William and of the successors of Blücher within their gates which prompted the revolutionary excesses of the Parisians when the news of Sedan arrived. It has been often made a reproach to them that on the 4th of September 1870 their frenzy was directed not against William and Bismarck and Moltke, but against Louis Napoleon and his dynasty,—thus signifying that domestic and political hate is a more potent impulse in France than patriotic resistance to a foreign foe. The prominence, on that day, of men soon to direct the outrages of the Commune, and the apparent joy of the populace at a moment when it ought to have been grim with patriotic sorrow, justified that reproach. But though certain Republican leaders might have liked defeat to destroy the Empire better than victory to consolidate it, they would have been torn to pieces by the same mob which clamoured for the downfall of the dynasty had they evinced the same disposition with Louis Napoleon on his triumphant way to Berlin. In this as in every other consideration of the French character, composed as it is of contradictory elements it is impossible to generalise. But it may be accepted that the presence of a victorious enemy within the frontier of a country, already acquainted with the woes of invasion, is calculated to

¹ Letters of Harriet, Countess Granville, 1810-1845. This was on July 30, 1815. The previous year similar scenes were witnessed. "Le 3 avril L. chante à l'opéra en présence des souverains alliés les couplets suivans 'Vive Guillaume, et ses guerriers vaillants! De ce royaume il sauve les enfans, Par sa victoire,'" etc.—Montgaillard, *Gouvernement Impérial*, 1814.

drive its sensitive inhabitants into a nervous attitude of recrimination towards its rulers, which island dwellers can scarce understand. Since the renewal of these sorrows in the war with Germany, that nervousness has increased, aggravated by depression because no statesman has yet arisen to restore France to its former position in Europe.

From reproaching ministers with being incompetent to recover Alsace and Lorraine, to believing them capable of suffering another invasion, is but a step for an agitated public. Thus it is that at moments of disaster, which ought under normal conditions to unite a people in supporting its Government, a French minister may, for events beyond his control, be treated as the most abject of traitors. When M. Jules Ferry, delivered to the mob by his friends, fell never to rise again because of a military reverse in Tonkin, it was not that the Parisians definitely expected to see the Black Flags marching down the Champs Élysées, like the Prussians in 1871. But to a population which had witnessed that spectacle the psychological idea of defeat, in no matter what part of the world, presented the unreasonable spectre of invasion. To the same source must be ascribed the tendency of the French recklessly to accuse their public men of being the agents of foreign powers. One day it was M. Ferry said to be in the pay of Prince Bismarck, at another time it was M. Clemenceau charged with being in the employ of England; and critics of the Russian alliance have muttered that this or that politician was the bondsman of the Tsar. It is the old tradition of the Revolution, when Republicans used to charge one another, as well as the King's party, with being friends of the foreigner, when Jacobins denounced Girondins for being subsidised by Mr. Pitt.

"Friend of the foreigner" is an English expression;—but it has had no such sinister signification in our island history. From long before the French Revolution our immunity from invasion has been the envy of Europe. Consequently, when our relations become strained with a continental power the desire is kindled abroad to make us cede our boast of centuries and submit to the lot of other lands which periodically see their fields and cities

ravaged by alien hordes. Once when travelling on the Mozambique Coast I met with a family of Hollanders to whose settlement was wafted sometimes, from below the Tropic of Capricorn, an echo of the discord between their kindred Boers and the British, and one of them said to me, "Confess, now, that you English have never forgiven us for burning your ships in the Medway." The patriotic Dutchwoman was not quite accurate. Our South African troubles have not been due to the infantile training of our nomadic speculators, who at their mothers' knees vowed to wipe out the outrage of Tromp and Ruyter. But it would be supremely true to say that we should have cause for undying resentment towards the Power which ever succeeded in landing a hostile force on our shores. Apart from the material and momentary harm, such an experience would alter our national character, substituting a nervous temper for our phlegmatic sense of security. Even at times when invasion has seemed imminent the panics which are said to have scared us did not greatly affect British unconcern. When Napoleon was planning his descent on our coasts our Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, went to inspect the works at Dover and Folkestone, constructed to face the attack. He there wrote to the notorious Mrs. Clarke letters, afterwards brought to light,¹ in which he described the view of the French camp on the opposite heights as a harmless panorama.² After that peril had passed, contemporary chroniclers relate that the disaster to our troops at Walcheren caused less excitement in England than the duel it provoked between Mr. Canning and Lord Castlereagh or the O. P. riots at Covent Garden—though Europe was in a blaze, in the year of Wagram and of Talavera,³ when no land but ours was free from the ingress of devouring armies.

That invasion remains an imminent alarm to France is manifest to all who have lived in that country since the Franco-German war laid open the frontier, inviolate for five-and-fifty

¹ Report of Committee of House of Commons, appointed January 1809 to investigate the conduct of H.R.H. the Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief, with regard to promotions, exchanges, and appointments to commissions in the army.

² 1804.

³ 1809.

years. That interval was less than the span of life of many an inhabitant of the Eastern provinces, as I have found on my travels. At St. Dié, which the Treaty of Frankfort made a frontier town, the old Dean of the Cathedral Chapter related how he had seen in his native Vosges the two invasions which ended the First and Second Empires. Nearer Paris there is the fortified city of Soissons, where the elders, who survived a few years ago, had agitated memories of their youth and old age. Taken and retaken by Cossack and by Prussian in 1814, it was bombarded again in 1870, so that the antiquities of the capital of Clovis have suffered. But it contains other relics, and in the courtyard of an inn there is a pile of cannon-ball left by the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg as a reminder of a debt one day to be repaid. Here, again, is the hôtel of a wealthy family at Reims. The daughter, who now bears an historic name, when she entertains her guests calls to mind that her first experience as a girl of doing the honours of a house was when Prince Hohenlohe took up his quarters in her home after Sedan, and stipulated that she or her mother should always dine at table with him. Here is a peaceful château in the Brie which looks as though nothing had disturbed its calm since Madame de Sévigné saw its stately walls rising, and Diderot discoursed in its salons. But the modern books in the old library are mutilated, and out of Thiers' *Consulate and Empire* are torn the pages describing the battle of Jena, with a scrawl to attest that it was the work of a corporal of a Prussian regiment in January 1871.

In England only to old places are historical souvenirs attached. Those which Americans like to venerate are as a rule older than the emigrations under the Stuarts of the first British settlers who crossed the Atlantic. In France modern buildings too have their traditions; while ancient edifices have associations dating, not from the past centuries which saw them reared, but from the lifetime of contemporaries. This is not exclusively due to the continental situation of France, for in Italy the traveller does not pause to consider monuments for their recent memories. The interest in most events in France in

the last hundred years is connected with the Revolution and its sequences. When there was a question of demolishing the Malmaison, a Frenchman, who had seen not a few national vicissitudes, said to me, "Our land unhappily so constantly renews its places of historical association, that it is impossible to preserve them all." No doubt it would not be easy to find in England a house the stones of which thrill the imagination because of a woman who lived in it within the nineteenth century. Mrs. Hannah More's cottage in the Mendips, or the home of Mrs. Hemans in the Vale of Clwyd, in spite of the chaster merits of those gifted matrons, can be regarded with less emotion than the château which the Citoyenne Bonaparte bought, and where she died a fallen Empress.

It is a curious thing that while we are a less literary nation than the French, many of the more interesting reminiscences of our elders have in this century referred to the exploits of literature rather than of action. "Ah! did you once see Shelley plain?" asked Mr. Browning; while Béranger, "Il avait petit chapeau avec redingote grise. . . . Il me dit: 'Bonjour, ma chère!' 'Il vous a parlé, grand'mère! Il vous a parlé!'" It is the more remarkable because there is no period of English history in which our men of action showed greater merit than in the years succeeding the French Revolution. Yet, though there was no colossal figure like that of Napoleon to overshadow our warriors, we have neglected the memory of heroes not less valiant than Marceau and Hoche, than Kléber and Masséna, of whom every Frenchman knows the fame. The victors of Trafalgar and of Waterloo we remember; and Sir John Moore we know, because a poet of a single song sang him an immortal dirge. But if the name of Sydney Smith be spoken in a company of Englishmen its sound evokes the quips of the reverend jester of the Whigs, and not the feats of the glorious defender of St. Jean d'Acre, who arrested Bonaparte's gigantic scheme of Eastern conquest, and who, in the Emperor's opinion, was a more fatal obstacle to his ambition than either Nelson or Wellington.

Thus because our wars were waged beyond the seas, and because Great Britain had done with revolution when Charles Edward forlornly marched to Derby and back, the liveliest recollections of the most aged who survived to the lifetime of men of our day were mild and commonplace compared with those of their neighbours in France. The oldest people we have ever known in our childhood had perhaps seen George III. bathing at Weymouth, or watched a press-gang at work ; while those of the next generation remembered the talk about Mr. Perceval's murder, or heard the bells for Princess Charlotte's marriage. While such pale, isolated memories were being impressed on young English minds of those days, how crowded and how vivid were the images which passed before French eyes :—the tragic figure of Marie Antoinette ; the farewell embrace of a father dragged to the guillotine ; the return of Napoleon from Elba between two triumphal entries of the Allies in Paris. For six-and-twenty years France was full of tumult, men's voices out-dinned by the crash of arms and the sound of trumpet. At first the streets and the fields were stained with French blood shed by French hands, but they presently were turned against the enemies of France. Then the clouds of cannon smoke, which succeeded those of incendiary flames, moved beyond the frontiers, within which for a decade and a half all the marchings and the counter-marchings were of the armies of France. Sometimes in the train of their commander there came a brave show worth seeing, even if it did not console for the tribute of manhood it cost. Sometimes the roads near the capital were encumbered with the spoils of the galleries of Europe. One day the Pope of Rome came a captive visitor to the new Charlemagne. Later a daughter of the Caesars was sent as a hymeneal hostage to the soldier of the Revolution who taught the last Emperor of the West that the original meaning of "Imperator" was "victorious general of the republic." After that the tattered relics of the retreat from Moscow presaged the coming end of abnormal experience and glory. But in less than a generation a new France had been constructed on the wrecked

foundations of the old edifice; the people had passed through such a series of emotions, had suffered such vicissitudes, and had witnessed such amazing scenes, that they and the generation procreated by them during the years of unrest formed a new nation. It retained part of its heritage of old Gallic civilisation as well as many of the virtues and defects of the race; but a quarter of a century of turmoil and tension had developed new qualities which made them the people least adapted in the world to be governed under constitutions improvised on the venerable British model.

Here, then, we see the chief effects of the French Revolution on modern France after a hundred years. There is the great tangible result, the machine of administrative government constructed by Napoleon; and there is the psychological or moral result of a people which has never yet found a political government to soothe and weld together the elements unsettled by the great upheaval. For the rest, the Revolution is not responsible for half of the good or of the evil attributed to it. It did not hasten one moment the invention of steam power or the application of electricity which have been the real revolutionary forces of the world in the nineteenth century, and the consequences of which the Ancient Regime could not have withstood. While it abolished certain intolerable grievances which bore most harshly on the humble, it did not redress the everlasting conflict between rich and poor. There are pages of Rousseau, treating of inequality, among the most eloquent of his writings which conduced to the Revolution, and they describe the lot of the poor in our time or perhaps it might be said, at any period of the world's history. At all events the French Revolution has done nothing to help the solutions of the problems which face humanity a century after its consummation. It might never have occurred, for any effect it has had on the relations of capital and labour, on the progress of Socialism, or on the power of Plutocracy. The best that can be said of the French Revolution is that just when civilisation was on the point of making history colourless it burst forth and produced for the

student and the artist a collection of pictures and documents thrilling and pathetic, grandiose and revolting, such as no epoch of antiquity or of modern times has supplied. But to provide intellectual pleasure for the cultivated it was hardly worth while that millions of the human race should have lamentably perished before their term.

BOOK II

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CHIEF OF
THE STATE

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTITUTION

FRENCH jurists and historians have expressed admiration at the conduct of the Parliamentary Convention which arranged the transmission of the Crown after the English Revolution of 1688. The king was in flight; a foreign invasion was imminent; and this was the moment chosen by the Lords and the Commons to display the national reverence for law and prescription by tranquilly discussing precedents afforded by the deposition of Richard II. and of Edward II. At last the venerable Maynard, who had witnessed all the vicissitudes of the century, lost patience and exclaimed, "A man in a revolution resolving to do nothing which is not strictly according to established form, resembles a man who has lost himself in the wilderness, and who stands crying, 'Where is the king's highway? I will walk nowhere but on the king's highway.'"

An eminent French authority¹ finds a parallel and a contrast with this incident in the proceedings of the Corps Législatif, in 1815, after Waterloo. The surrounding circumstances were graver. Blücher was at the gates of Paris. The official *Moniteur* announced that the capital was in the hands of the Allies; and the representative Chamber, instead of considering the dangers menacing the country, discussed with animation a Declaration of Rights—presented by Garat, the old Minister of the Convention who announced the death-sentence to Louis XVI.—defining, in

¹ E. Boutmy, *Études de Droit constitutionnel*.

philosophic phrase, sovereignty of the people and liberty of the individual. An unphilosophic member, who came to interrupt the deliberation with the announcement that the English had arrived, was scornfully silenced. So while the Allies were concluding the capitulation, the Chamber, having completed its Declaration of rights and of principles, proceeded to vote with academic zeal fifty articles of the new Constitution, which was not accepted by Louis XVIII.

The respective methods of these two bodies mark both the national characteristic of the peoples they represented and the attendant circumstances of the Revolutions in the two countries. England had the advantage of undergoing her decisive political crises, not only free from the pressure of alien interference,—for Ireland, which was invaded by the foreigner, was more distant from the capital than France or the Low Countries,—but also in the century before the age of Voltaire had imbued all Europe with its rationalism, at a time when even in France, the tendency in matter of politics, as well as of science and theology, was to recognise authority and to register precedents. Had the English Revolution been deferred, the Bill of Rights¹ might have been a more symmetrical document,¹ more sonorously phrased, but it would not have been an enduring possession.

The Constitution under which the last generation of the nineteenth century has lived in France is distinguished from others which preceded it in that it contains no declaration of principle, no philosophic or humanitarian pretension. It would be too much to say that the absence of axioms similar to those found in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, or in the Constitution of 1848, has given it a durability not enjoyed by the regimes initiated by those instruments. It is, however, certain that the circumstances which moved the National Assembly to confine itself to the organisation of the public powers without theoretical dissertations on doctrine, have, in their development,

¹ "Il n'y a dans le Bill des Droits ni ordre ni plan d'ensemble. Les 13 articles qui le composent se suivent comme au hasard. Cela est tout à fait contraire à l'idée que nous nous faisons des actes issus d'une situation révolutionnaire" (Boutmy).

preserved the Constitution of 1875, which has lasted to the end of the century with little modification. The Constitution of the Third Republic owes its origin, as it owes its duration, to the weakness of purpose and the dissensions of the monarchical parties. The National Assembly which established the Republic was not a republican body. The majority was monarchical, but the Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists composing it failed to agree. The country had grown weary of an avowedly provisional state of things, so the necessity was forced upon the unenthusiastic Assembly¹ of confirming Marshal MacMahon as Chief of the State, with a Republican constitution to guarantee the Septennate. Hence the debates which preluded the passing of the Constitutional Law were unique in their character. Little as they resembled discussions in the English legislature on constitutional changes, with their grave references to historical precedents,² they departed also from French tradition in that they were conducted without classical allusion and without didactic theorising. We are all familiar with the pedantic extravagances of the orators of the Convention, faintly echoed by those who aided Lamartine in making the Constitution of 1848. But the National Assembly reared the Third Republic without any inspiration from Greek and Latin antiquity, without any proofs from the Encyclopædists. M. Jules Favre refrained from comparing himself with Thrasybulus, and the reactionary composition of the "Commission des Trente"³ did not produce the obvious allusion to the Thirty Tyrants. The regicide date of the 21st of January, though it raised the ire of aged Royalists whose fathers had served Louis XVI., failed to call forth from

¹ The reporter of the Commission which had examined the Bill for the "Organisation des pouvoirs publics," M. de Ventavon, described the situation very well: "Il est difficile dans la situation actuelle des esprits de fonder des institutions définitives. Tous les gouvernements qui se sont succédés en France y ont laissé des partisans, et ces partisans sont représentés dans l'Assemblée Nationale. Comment grouper une majorité pour établir un gouvernement qui doit être le triomphe exclusif d'un parti?" (Ass. Nat. Séance du 21 Janvier 1875).

² One or two speakers, for instance M. Dufaure, referred to historical precedents, but rather as warnings than as models of conduct.

³ The Commission des Trente, nominated at the end of 1873 to prepare the constitutional laws, contained scarcely any Republicans among its thirty members.

Republicans the inapt but once inevitable reference to Marcus Brutus; and M. Jules Simon argued with sound philosophy, without one specious quotation from the philosophers of the last century.

In an enactment passed under such conflicting circumstances the commonplaces of revolutionary terminology could no more find a place than declarations in favour of limited monarchy or of plebiscitary dictatorship. The keynote to the situation is given in the concluding protests of the extreme Legitimists on the day the new Constitution was voted by the National Assembly.¹ They vainly besought the Broglies and the Haussonvilles to hesitate before joining with Republicans of every shade, not only with Léon Say and Dufaure, but with Gambetta and Jules Favre, in founding the Republic. But the Orleanists justified their transaction with the Left Centre by the belief that the Conservative Republic would be the safest halting-place, till abdication or death took the Comte de Chambord out of the way of the foundation of a constitutional monarchy; while the members of the Extreme Left knew that any form of Republic, once established, was likely to become their possession in the face of monarchical dissensions. Thus by a compromise, regarded as provisional by many of its supporters, voted without phrases and without enthusiasm, was founded the regime which has proved more durable than any other set up in France since the ancient Monarchy succumbed on the 10th of August 1792.

A constitution thus brought into being presents no scientific interest, such as that which the Constitution of the United States offers. It is chiefly interesting as the scheme of government under which a great people has managed to live for a certain number of years. Even decorated with a preamble of pretentious maxims like that prefixed to the Constitution of 1848, it would not have altered the fact that, though France is more exercised in the practice of constitution-making than any other civilised nation, it has never seriously applied itself to the

¹ Ass. Nat. Séance du 25 Février 1875.

scientific study of constitutional law. It has no classical literature on the subject, and since the Revolution its Faculties of Law have made but faint attempts to give instruction in it,¹—the great jurists not being attracted to a subject made barren in their nation by recurring political vicissitude. The existence of a treatise like Tocqueville's *Démocratie en Amérique* displays at once the aptitude of the French genius to deal with constitutional problems, and its compulsion to turn to other countries to study them.

It would serve, therefore, no useful purpose to institute a comparison between the French, the English, and the American conceptions of a constitution. We might examine, for instance, the Constitution of 1848. We might point out how this imperative act of the nation, creating out of nothing an organised hierarchy, differs, on the one hand, from the English Constitution founded on a series of treaties made during the course of ages between certain ancient corporations, the immemorial depositaries of public powers; and, on the other hand, differs from the Federal Constitution of the United States, with its distinct and sovereign bodies politic, which unite to create and to limit the State. We might recognise in all this the influence of national characteristic—of the English love for tradition and informal precedent, of the French tendency towards abstract rationalism, with its refined classifications and its precise formulas. We might further illustrate our theme by a contrast between the origins of the American and the French democracy—the former, without a past, never having been mixed with any other element, establishing its regime without strife and without the destruction of institutions; the latter, the final transformation of an aged and complex society effected by means of a struggle, violent, yet not wholly conclusive.

But while we are engaged on these instructive parallels, Louis Bonaparte comes along, with no other merit to recommend him than the bearing of the name of one who, half a

¹ A chair of constitutional law was created at Paris for Rossi in 1835, but was abolished in 1851, and was revived only in 1879 (Boutmy).

century before, had made short work of constitutions and their makers. So before we have time to formulate our conclusions, the Sovereignty of the People expresses itself in a manner repugnant to philosophers, and by the voice of the plebiscite ratifies the Coup d'État of December, as it had ratified that of the 18 Brumaire, thus deciding to dispense with constitutional government for a season.

A regime will have had to last half a century without revolution before the French will begin to believe in the durability of their constitutions, and before jurists can make them the subject of profitable examination. Sixty years ago, when the Monarchy of July gave promise of establishing a permanent form of government in France, and the prospects of the Orleans dynasty seemed assured, Tocqueville, in the midst of his studies of American democracy, could not refrain from sounding a note of scepticism. He was commenting upon the somewhat ironical theory of the immutability of the French constitution. He illustrated it by quoting the decree of Chancellor Maupeou under Louis XV., which provided that the new tribunal of judges instituted by it should be irremovable, like their predecessors, who had just been swept away.¹ This tradition of immutability has been maintained, so that in the intervals of revolutions constitutional changes can only be effected by the deliberate setting in motion of an elaborate and special machinery.² Here French and

¹ *La Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. i. note L.

² Revision :—The doctrine was laid down in 1884 that, while it was impossible to limit the powers of a revisional Congress by any legal sanction, it was practicable to place a *de facto* limitation on the scope of their deliberations, by a moral engagement taken by the majority in each Chamber not to discuss any articles of the Constitution which had not been formally specified in advance. There is no doubt that Art. 8 of the Constitutional Law of February 25, 1875, in making the meeting of a revisional assembly depend on a double resolution passed previously by each of the two Chambers, intended that both branches of the Legislature should be in accord, both on the necessity of a revision, and on the nature of the questions to be decided. In 1884 the Prime Minister, M. Ferry, and the Minister of Justice, M. Martin Feuillée, in making their proposals for Revision, laid down the axiom, which was not seriously questioned, that there could be no convocation of the National Assembly unless the resolutions of the two Chambers were identical in their general scope. It is clear that this position detracts from the importance of a constituent Congress, but there is no escaping from the dilemma : so long as the consent of the two Houses is required for the meeting of the Congress, either

English ideas and practice are entirely opposed. We have no revolutions in our country, but we possess no legal safeguards against hasty amendments of the Constitution. We have no cognisance of constituent assemblies as distinct from legislative assemblies. Each succeeding Parliament is competent to act in either capacity; and the same procedure with which bankruptcy or cattle-plague is regulated would suffice to alter the succession to the Crown. That the working of this system, even with a wide franchise, does not result either in inordinate constitutional changes, or in collisions between the Estates of the Realm, is doubtless largely due to national character. It is also due to the wisdom of our ancestors, who have always refrained from substituting a written constitution for the scattered laws and traditions which order the government of the kingdom. Drawn up in the form of a statute, it would present perpetual temptation to reformers, even though safeguarded by precautions with which all communities, whether prone to change or not, find it necessary to protect a written constitution.

These considerations on the instability of the French Constitution might seem to indicate that we should not at the outset examine those institutions which during the last century have been repeatedly subject to change, but should turn first to those which, having survived revolutions, may be regarded as permanently established.

Political prediction is always unsafe. Yet a prophet would not be considered rash who foretold that in England twenty years hence the Crown, with its attributes, will remain unchanged, but that local administration will have undergone serious modifications. On the other hand, in France no one would predict the reform or the abolition of the communal system in that period; while few are confident that the supreme executive power will be then vested in a President of a parliamentary Republic. This being so, the question arises whether it would not be better to

its proceedings must be previously agreed upon, the Congress becoming simply a registering assembly, or the proceedings are not agreed upon and no Congress can take place.

work upwards, studying Municipal and Departmental organisation before dealing with the Executive and the Legislature. That plan has its advantages, and was employed by Tocqueville in his description of the system of the United States. But he points out that, while in America the commune lends its functionaries to the Government, in centralised France the Government imposes its functionaries on the commune,¹—and little progress has been made since in the direction of decentralisation. It is necessary therefore, in order to understand the organisation of the commune and of the department, to study the machinery of the legislature and of the central Government from which it depends.

¹ *La Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. i. c. 5.

CHAPTER II

THE CHIEF OF THE STATE¹

I

FEW subjects are more attractive to the student of modern democracy than the various conceptions which the French people have held in the last hundred years of the attributes of a Chief of the Executive. They have not succeeded one another with the gradual development of evolution ; nor have they followed the regular course of periodic revolution and reaction. They have to be referred to a number of causes. The alleged instability of the national character is not sufficient to account for the history of the last century in France. Account has also to be taken of the premature suddenness of the great emancipation ; of the personality of the master into whose arms France threw herself, not knowing what to do with her new liberty, who made the succession difficult for ordinary mortals ; of the peculiar influence that exterior relations have constantly had on the domestic destinies of the country. Only thus is it possible to understand how it was the same nation which, ten years after

¹ The scientific order of examining the component parts of the French Constitution would be (1) the Constituent, (2) the Legislative, and (3) the Executive Powers ; but it will be more convenient to depart from it, and before examining the Legislative power to consider the functions and the position of the chief of the Executive under the Republic. The President does not unite in his person all the executive attributes of the Government, which he shares with his ministers ; but they, though not all Senators or Deputies, are so dependent on the changing caprice of the Lower Chamber, that they are in practice a temporary committee of the Legislature. It will therefore be best to treat of them in the chapters relating to Parliament.

publishing its Declaration of the Rights of Man, handed over those destinies to the soldier whom it made Emperor, whose consistent policy was a complete negation of each article of that famous document; which, having submitted with pride to the glorious tyranny of a military dictator, accepted as his successors, from the hands of his foreign conquerors, the unwarlike heirs of the regime, the upsetting of which had cost Europe a quarter of a century of convulsion; which, half a generation later, exchanged its belated exponents of the divine right of kings for a statutory monarchy after the British model; and wearying of it wandered back into the wastes of doctrinaire revolution, investing itself there with universal suffrage, which it forthwith confided to the guardianship of Louis Napoleon to form the anomalous foundation of the anomalous autocracy established by him.

The examination of these phenomena, of deep interest to the philosophic historian, has no place in a work dealing with the actual institutions of France. The nomination of Bonaparte to the Consulate, by the remnant of the Anciens and the Cinq Cents, has no more connection with the manner in which M. Carnot or M. Faure was chosen to the Presidency of the Republic, than has the election of Hugues Capet as King by the nobles and prelates of the Duchy of France,—save in the sense that every political event of this century depends on the Revolution, and on the subsequent reconstruction of the country by Napoleon.

In considering the position and attributes of the President of the Republic, we have not therefore to investigate an hierarchic line even of the moderate length of that of the Presidents of the United States. The defeat of Sedan, and the consequent overthrow of the Second Empire, make 1870 a date as indicative of a new order of things in France as 1792 or 1848. A new Government had to be created out of nothing amid circumstances of peculiar hardship. The Government of the 4th of September was only a Committee of National Defence; and it was not until the capitulation of Paris that the armistice gave the opportunity for the election of a National Assembly. The first act of that

body on meeting at Bordeaux was unanimously¹ to declare M. Thiers "Chief of the Executive of the French Republic." By his investiture with that title, and by its use in the preliminaries of peace, signed at Versailles the following week, the Third Republic was consecrated by the voice of the people. If the name given to it of a "Republic without Republicans" was an exaggeration, it is true that the National Assembly elected by universal suffrage was an anti-republican body; for no French Legislature of the century had included so many men of rank and fortune. A great majority of its members were of the two sections of the Monarchical party. The Imperialists were discredited by the war; while the prolongation of the struggle by Gambetta's heroic persistence, and the menace of revolution in Paris, covered Republicanism with unpopularity in the country, which the unpatriotic excesses of the Commune were soon to invigorate.

A year after Sedan the Assembly passed a law conferring on the Chief of the Executive the title of President of the Republic.² M. Thiers continued to be a member of the National Assembly, and sometimes took part in its debates. It was not prepared to follow the old Minister of Louis Philippe in his gradual but definite adoption of the Republican form of government. Gambetta's famous speech³ at Grenoble, in which he declared that a new social stratum was about to take possession of political power, alarmed Moderates as well as extreme Reactionaries. Some months later, just when the German army of occupation was withdrawn before the stipulated time, owing to the speedy payment of the war indemnity by the patriotic energy of M. Thiers, his Government was defeated in the Assembly after a speech he had made in its support. The President forthwith tendered his resignation.⁴ A law had been passed,⁵ in consequence of his

¹ February 17, 1871. The Assembly was so nearly unanimous that a division was not called for.

² The law was passed by a majority of 491 to 94, Gambetta and one or two Radicals, who wanted an appeal to the country, voting in the minority, which was generally composed of extreme Monarchists. (*Annales de l'Ass. Nat.* i. 5.)

³ September 26, 1872, "Les nouvelles couches."

⁴ May 24, 1873.

⁵ March 13, 1873. Previous to this the President had the right to take part in debates. This law enacted that he could only be heard after giving notice to

previous threat to resign, substituting ministerial for presidential responsibility in the case of collisions between the Chief of the State and the Assembly. But the majority did not ask M. Thiers this time to reconsider his decision, and with unbecoming haste elected and proclaimed on the spot Marshal MacMahon President of the French Republic. The aged statesman may have committed errors. Personal ambition may have been a motive for his adhesion to the principle of a Republic. The consciousness of the value of his services to his country may have unduly filled him with the idea that he was indispensable to its government. The Reactionaries may have honestly believed that his adoption of the Republic would not save it from the hands of those whose Republicanism was that of the Commune.¹ Nevertheless, in the eyes of Europe, the curt dismissal of the venerable Liberator of the Territory was an act of wanton ingratitude, prejudicial to France as seeming to be a token of national inconstancy.² Its only justification would have been the success of the majority in founding a stable government of monarchical form. The sole result, however, of the 24th of May 1873 was to provide a definite date to mark the opening of the era of reactionary incompetence in France. During many years after the day when the Monarchists sacrificed M. Thiers, because he seemed to obstruct their schemes, the country intimated from time to time, more or less clearly, that it was not indisposed to discard the Republic, if only a strong and

the President of the Chamber, and that no debate could take place during the sitting in which he had thus taken part. The law created no precedent for M. Thiers' successors, and its only importance was in laying down the principle that no parliamentary assembly could deliberate freely in the presence of the Chief of the Executive.

¹ The rupture of the majority with the President was brought about by the hostile attitude of the extreme Republicans to him in the matter of the Barodet election. M. de Rémusat, M. Thiers' Minister for Foreign Affairs, was candidate for Paris, and was opposed by M. Barodet, a sympathiser with the Commune (elected Senator of the Seine twenty-three years later in 1896), whom Gambetta supported, the President's candidate being beaten by 45,000 votes.

² The Reactionaries assert that Prince Bismarck took exception to the dismissal of M. Thiers, because he thought that the result would be the foundation of a strong monarchy better able than the Republic to cope with Germany. This theory seems to be founded on unofficial statements made by M. de Gontaut Biron, the Royalist Ambassador of France at Berlin. But even if he represented accurately the feeling of the German Chancellor, it is certain that the indignation felt in England and elsewhere at the treatment of M. Thiers was disinterested.

imposing form of government were forthcoming to take its place ; and each recurring occasion only helped to establish a tradition that anti-Republicanism in France is synonymous with political feebleness and ineptitude.

It is from the election of Marshal MacMahon that the history of the Presidency of the Third Republic commences, though his election was compassed for the purpose of extinguishing both the Presidency and the Republic.

When the National Assembly met in November 1873, the President, in his message read by the Prime Minister, the Duc de Broglie,¹ after remarking that nothing had occurred in the vacation to trouble the public peace, recommended the House to establish a form of government which would attract the support of all lovers of order without distinction of party. Untroubled as the autumn had been, important events had occurred which produced, instead of a decided declaration of policy, this vague appeal for the establishment of a vague government. The Comte de Paris had made his ill-starred pilgrimage to Frohsdorf.² There he abandoned to the grandson of Charles X. the pretensions of the family of Orleans to the Crown, and accepted the position of Dauphin of France, thus by implication denouncing his grandfather Louis Philippe as a usurper. With the government of Moral Order in command of the administration, it seemed, in spite of the successes of Republican candidates at legislative bye-elections, as though the occasion had arrived for the restoration of the Monarchy. At that very moment its supporters were thrown into disarray by the Comte de Chambord's³ resumption of his original resolve only to accept the Crown with the white flag, which thus became the shroud of the Royalist party. Not that that party intended to end its life at the moment when it seemed to be fuller of vitality than at any period since 1815 ; but the situation was embarrassing. A Republic without Republicans is less anomalous than a Monarchy without a king, and the only

¹ At that epoch the Minister who formed and gave his name to the Cabinet was officially styled "Vice-President of the Council." After 1876 he was called "President of the Council."

² August 5, 1873.

³ October 27, 1873.

possibility of the advent of a king lay in the abdication or the death of the Comte de Chambord. For the pretender's adherence to the white flag alienated even ardent anti-Republicans, the gallant soldier at the head of affairs declaring that the rifles would go off by themselves if the army were despoiled of its glorious tricolour.

The uncertainty as to what form of government the country desired was such that even the Bonapartists, presuming on the Emperor's death to dim the stigma of Sedan, and full of hope in the stripling promise of his son, boldly proposed their traditional remedy for the perplexities of democracies, and invited the Assembly to prescribe a plebiscite at which every adult citizen should pronounce for Monarchy, Republic, or Empire.¹ Meanwhile the reproach addressed by the Republicans to the unsolid monarchical majority seemed justified. "You will not inaugurate the Republic," said MM. Grévy and Jules Simon, "and you cannot found the monarchy."² Undoubtedly the idea of the majority in establishing the Septennate, was that it would be a halting-place where the Monarchists might organise their forces and arrange their differences, while the permanent exclusion of the aged M. Thiers might thus be assured. No one, however, quite knew the part that Marshal MacMahon was going to play. When the proposal was made to confer the Presidency upon him for ten years, that term obviously suggested comparisons with the Consulate conferred on Bonaparte; but it was equally obvious that no parallel could be drawn with the 18 Brumaire, as no one imputed to the Marshal the intention of re-establishing a throne for his own occupation. Some of the Royalists described the arrangement as a Protectorate; others referred to the Lieutenant-General of the Comte d'Artois in 1814 between Napoleon's abdication at Fontainebleau and the arrival of Louis XVIII.; while other orators demanded, as had been already asked concerning M. Thiers, whether MacMahon was going to be a Washington or a Monk.

The latter of those worthies is the one hero of English

¹ Proposition Éschasserieux, November 5, 1873.

² Assemblée Nationale, Séances du 18 et 19 Novembre 1873.

history whose name since the French Revolution has been more familiar in France than in England. The successive dethronements of various dynasties, and the subsequent recall of some of them, have made Frenchmen constantly regard a restoration of a former regime as the possible termination of every form of government. Consequently the apparition of the General who brought back Charles Stuart to England is always being looked for, and each generation asks, "Who is to be the Monk of our Restoration?" When Dumouriez, after the victories of Valmy and Jemmapes, declared against the Convention, his defection was ascribed to the wish to be the Monk of the French Revolution. Five years later, amid the anarchy of the Directory, the Royalists rashly hoped that the fame of Monk might be the ambition of the young hero of Arcola and of Rivoli. When, in 1814, that General of the Army of Italy was relegated to an Italian island, having in the meanwhile been Emperor of Western Europe, would-be Monks to bring back the Bourbons swarmed among the "gens de Bonaparte." It was not the moment for an ambitious soldier to play the part, as Marmont found out; but there was no lack of civilians among the late Imperial retinue to share the credit of the Restoration with the Allies. Talleyrand would not have disdained it; and Fouché, duke of the Empire, thought that his share in the guillotining of one royal brother demanded his instant protection of the two survivors. The escape from Elba, however, put an end to retrospective claims to the Monkship of the first Restoration. So when Louis XVIII. was finally put back in the Tuileries no one disputed that he owed his throne to alien aid, as the grateful monarch testified when, like Charles II., who created his restorer Duke of Albemarle, he made Wellington Duc de Brunoy in the kingdom of France as recompense for the victory of Waterloo.¹ The nephew

¹ The formal granting of this title by Louis XVIII. to the Duke of Wellington is difficult to verify. In the *Illustrated News* of September 25, 1852, a letter was published from a witness of the entry of the Allies into Paris, who repeated the story that Louis XVIII. made Wellington "Duke of Brunoy," and also a "Knight of the Holy Ghost and a Marshal of France"; but at his funeral the Dukedom of Brunoy was not included in the list of foreign titles proclaimed at the grave-side by the Heralds. Louis XVIII., before the Revolution, when Comte de Provence,

of the loser of that battle was perhaps the least likely Monk ever conceived ; yet there were ingenuous Royalists who imagined that Louis Napoleon made his Coup d'État to prepare the way for the elder Bourbons disinherited by his enemies the Orleans. The Bishop of Chartres, Mgr. de Montals, an aged Legitimist, ventured thus to address the Prince President to his face : " You cannot keep for yourself the supreme power. The part that you have to play is that of Monk, and in saving France thus you will acquire a more lasting glory than that of your uncle." ¹ When the Man of December was a fallen Emperor and a prisoner at Wilhelmshöhe, it was the perverted image of Monk which impelled Bazaine to treason at Metz. Finally, when the Comte de Paris, with the fatality which attended his every transaction, accepted in an evil moment the protection of the soldier of fortune who, as Minister of War, had insolently dismissed his kinsmen from the army of France, it was because his adherents were persuaded that at last a veritable Monk had appeared in the person of General Boulanger.

Marshal MacMahon did not model his conduct on that of any historical personage, either in restoring a dynasty, or in establishing a commonwealth, or in seizing a dictatorship. The Septennate was conferred upon him, in spite of the opposition of

purchased the Seigneurie of Brunoy from the heirs of Marmontel, who, early in the century, had bought from the La Rochefoucauld family the Marquisate, which, in 1775, was erected into a Duché-Pairie. It was thus the private appanage of the restored King, and if he conferred a title on the Duke of Wellington it is likely to have been selected by him as a personal gift. Living near Brunoy, I found that though the tradition lingered there nothing authentic was known about it. Messrs. Hachette told me that they had not been able to corroborate the version of it in the 1878 edition of their *Environ de Paris Illustrés* : it was, I imagine, copied from the *Itinéraire de Paris à Sens par Jeannest St. Hilaire*, where the fact is stated without the citation of decree or letters patent. The Duchess of Wellington kindly made some inquiries at my request at the Heralds' College in 1895, without result. In the *Bulletins des Lois* of the years succeeding the Restoration I can find no decree conferring this title among the patents of honours conferred on Talleyrand and other makers of the Restoration : but if Louis XVIII. conferred French honours on the victor of Waterloo he would not have given excessive publicity to them. A learned resident of Brunoy, M. Ch. Mottheau, who does not think that the story was a mere invention of Bonapartist enemies of the Bourbons, informs me that a relative of M. de Courcel is investigating the interesting point.

¹ *Hist. du Cardinal Pie*, livre ii. c. 4.

the Republicans, as a bridge of years which might possibly lead from the Republic to a Monarchy. Some of the opposition leaders denounced the arrangement as illegal. They argued that the National Assembly was a constituent body whose mandate was to make a constitution, and that in precluding that work by attaching the Presidency to a person for a term of years beyond the limits of its own existence, it was both transgressing its powers and destroying its constituent character. One of the weightiest opponents of the Law of November 1873, conferring the Presidency on MacMahon for seven years, was the only President of the Republic who ever profited to the full from the septennial rule thus established. M. Grévy had, in the National Assembly of 1848, acquired his first fame in opposing the creation of the office of President of the Republic; and the general tenor of his criticisms during the debates of 1873 and 1875 was to indicate the dangerous use to which that post might be put.

Thus the Chambers, created under the Constitution of 1875, were not called upon to use their prerogative in choosing a chief of the Executive. They found a President ready installed, who eventually was much more difficult to dislodge than modern rulers of France usually have been,¹ and the somewhat confused debates in the National Assembly throw little new light on the conception of the Chief of the State. The most important incident of these discussions occurred after the adoption of an amendment making the Senate elective by the same electors as the Chamber of Deputies. The President thereupon sent a message to the Assembly to the effect, that as that vote destroyed the special character of the Second Chamber, and compromised

¹ The legendary "J'y suis, j'y reste," which became the device of the Marshal during his conflict with the Chamber after the "Seize Mai," was constantly quoted as indicative of his character long before there was any certainty of the Republicans getting the upper hand. In the Assemblée Nationale, on the eve of the passing of the Septennate law, M. de Castellane told the well-known story, "C'était à Malakoff : le premier il entre dans la citadelle ; elle est minée ; elle va l'ensevelir sous ses ruines ; n'importe. Il se jette sur le télégraphe et écrit à son chef cette parole sublime : 'J'y suis et j'y reste.' Que le parti conservateur imite cet exemple. Lui aussi il est dans une tour minée," etc. (Séance du 18 Nov. 1873).

the conservative interests of the country, he could not accept it.¹ The Republicans yielded, and during all the long period in which they have had the majority in the two Chambers they have never used it to restore the amendment of the Constitution disallowed by Marshal MacMahon.

II

The articles of the Constitution of 1875 relating to the President of the Republic, his election and his powers, are as follows. He is elected by absolute majority of the Senate and Chamber united, which electoral college is called the National Assembly, and in the case of extraordinary vacancy, owing to death or other cause, it is forthwith summoned for the election of a new President,² the Council of Ministers being invested with the executive power in the interval. He is elected for seven years and can be re-elected;³ but it is necessary to complete the entire septennial term in order to be eligible for re-election, as the term commences from the day of the appointment of the actual President without any reference to the duration of the presidency of his predecessor.⁴ As M. Grévy was made to relinquish the presidency early in the second term, France has not yet experienced the government of one President of the Republic for fourteen years. It is urged that that period is far too long for an elective Chief of the State to be at the head of affairs, it being the length of an average reign in most countries, or indeed of a dynasty in modern France—longer than the First

¹ Assemblée Nationale, Séances du 11 et 12 Février 1875 (see book iii. c. i. p. 271.)

² L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 2 et 7. (The letters L.C. signify Loi Constitutionnelle.)

³ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 2.

⁴ In the early days of Marshal MacMahon's presidency it was his practice to summon informally to the Elysée certain prominent members of the Right Centre and of the Left Centre of the National Assembly to confer with him on the Constitutional Laws then about to be voted. The moderate Conservatives thus proposed a scheme (somewhat resembling the Constitutional Law of the United States relating to the vacancy in the office of President), to the effect that if the Marshal disappeared before the close of his septennate he should be replaced by another President who should hold office until 1880, the date at which the seven years of the Marshal expired. This plan was known as the "Septennat impersonnel."

Empire, and almost as long as the Restoration. The unpopularity of M. Grévy in his second term of office, and the comparative ease with which he was prevailed upon to resign, perhaps indicate that a prolonged sojourn at the head of the State contains in itself the remedy to prevent its becoming dangerous.

The President of the Republic has the right of initiating laws concurrently with the members of the two Chambers;¹ a power which bears more resemblance to that enjoyed by the Sovereign in England and in other constitutional monarchies than that of the President of the United States, who only recommends measures to the examination of Congress.² He promulgates the laws when they have been voted by the two Chambers within a month in ordinary cases, and within three days if they are declared urgent by either House of Legislature.³ He has the right of pardon,⁴ which is practically an absolute right, subject to certain formalities. He has at his disposal the armed forces of the country; a power which seems remarkable when it is considered that the President to whom it was given without restriction by the Assembly which established the Republic was a Marshal of France. The explanation seems to be that the Republicans were so glad to have the Republican regime assured by peaceable means that they were willing to give large prerogatives to the Chief of the State. They felt sure that in the face of the hopeless division of the monarchical parties the power could not be used by the Marshal-President against the young Republic, and that in the future the legislative representatives, to whom was confided the choice of the Chief of the Executive, would take care not to elect a person likely to misuse this prerogative.⁵ It is limited by the Constitutional Law of July 1875, which declares that the President cannot

¹ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 3.

² Pierre, *Traité de Droit Politique*: "Initiative des Lois."

³ L.C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 7.

⁴ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 3.

⁵ "Nous avons consenti à vous donner le pouvoir exécutif le plus fort qu'on ait jamais constitué dans un pays d'élection et de démocratie" (Gambetta, Ass. Nat. Séance du 12 Février 1875).

declare war without the previous consent of the two Chambers.¹ All civil and military appointments are made by him; but this is only a nominal prerogative,² the President of the French Republic having no other patronage at his disposal than that of the posts in his own household. The American spoils' system has no counterpart in France. It is practised in the sense that since the Republicans came into power the profession of Reactionary opinions has been generally a bar to employment in the administration and the magistracy, just as Republicans under the government of Moral Order were excluded from public appointments. But so far from the election of a new President causing an upheaval in the civil service, like that associated with the advent to office of a President in the United States, there are fewer functionaries affected by a change of the Chief of the State than by one of the frequent changes of ministry. Consequently the crowd of office-seekers who throng the receptions at the White House is unknown at the Élysée, as on the most importunate the French President has nothing to bestow.³

The President of the Republic usually presides over the meetings of the Cabinet, in which he takes sometimes an active part, his observations generally relating to matters within the competence of the Foreign Minister or the Minister of War. He presides at all the national solemnities, and to him are accredited ambassadors and diplomatic envoys. He has, moreover, under certain limitations, the power to ratify and negotiate treaties.⁴ Unlike the Ministers he is accounted personally responsible only in the case of high treason.⁵ Finally, a member of any family which has reigned over France is ineligible for the office.⁶

¹ L.C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 9.

² M. Jules Simon records that when he became Prime Minister in 1876 Marshal MacMahon, in the most constitutional manner, never refused his signature for the replacing of Reactionary functionaries by Republicans, though the President made no disguise of his personal preference for "enemies of the Republic."

³ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 3. The Constitution, in providing that every act of the President has to be countersigned by a Minister, relieves him of the responsibility of private patronage.

⁴ L.C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 8.

⁵ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 6.

⁶ L.C. 13 Août 1884, art. 2.

Some of these attributes will be noticed later. But two prerogatives conferred on the President by the Constitution, that of dissolving the Chamber of Deputies before its legal term, on the advice of the Senate, and that of adjourning the sittings of Parliament for a month,¹ were used by Marshal MacMahon during the crisis known as the Seize Mai, from the date on which it commenced : and reference to it here will fall in proper chronological order.

The first Chamber elected after the voting of the Constitutional Laws of 1875 contained a large Republican majority, the famous 363 ; while in the Senate the Reactionaries prevailed. The clerical party, disappointed at its defeat at the polls, due in part to its exterior interference, which was imperilling the relations of France with Germany and Italy, became unduly aggressive. The ministry, presided over by M. Jules Simon, the least anti-clerical of French Liberals, had consequently to accept a motion inviting it to use the same disciplinary policy towards the Church which had been followed by Napoleon III. and Louis Philippe. It was then that Gambetta made use of his famous exclamation, "Le cléricalisme, voilà l'ennemi." Some days later, on the morrow of a less important debate, a letter appeared in the *Officiel*, dated May 16, 1877, from President MacMahon to his Prime Minister, informing him that he had no longer his confidence, as it was clear that he had lost the influence over the Chamber which a President of the Council ought to exercise.

M. Jules Simon resigned and the Duc de Broglie took his place. The President announced to the Chambers that he intended to act on his constitutional right of choosing counsellors sharing his views, and by virtue of the Law of 1875 he adjourned Parliament for a month. On resuming, the Lower House, by a large majority, denounced the coalition of groups hostile to the Republic, and the Senate, at the request of the President, authorised the dissolution of the Chamber. The administrative electoral machinery was now in the hands of the Reactionaries, the Broglie Ministry having followed the policy, traditional in

¹ L. C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 2.

France, of replacing the functionaries hostile to it with its own partisans. In spite of this advantage for the official candidates, patronised by the Government according to the methods practised under the Empire, and in spite of a fiery manifesto of the Marshal-President (which indeed was eclipsed by a posthumous appeal of M. Thiers, who died on the eve of the elections), a Republican majority was sent back to the Chamber, and the Broglie Cabinet resigned. The Marshal sent for General de Rochebouet, who formed a ministry of unknown Reactionaries ; but as the Chamber refused to vote Supply it survived only for a few days, when M. Dufaure formed a Republican Cabinet¹ which lasted for the remainder of the MacMahon Presidency.

The history of the *Seize Mai* merits attention, as it indicates the difference of the English and the French conception of what is constitutional. It also displays how inconveniently a written constitution may work with parliamentary institutions. The Constitutional Laws of the Third Republic make no mention of the nomination of Ministers which is deemed the prerogative of the President, in virtue of the article investing him with the appointment to all civil and military posts. The practice now is for a member of the retiring Cabinet² to countersign the presidential nomination of the new Prime Minister, who in turn countersigns those of his colleagues. But if all the retiring Ministers refused to thus endorse the nomination of the new President of the Council there would probably be a deadlock, the law making no provision for the case. Here we have then what in England would be called a Constitutional practice growing up side by side with a written Constitution. Again, the law is silent on the powers of the President of the Republic to dismiss a ministry. So an unwritten theory has here also to be applied to the effect that the President cannot make his Ministers resign so long as they retain the confidence of the majority in the popular chamber. But on the *Seize Mai* the ministry dismissed by the Marshal had a great majority in the Chamber, and his

¹ December 13, 1877.

² Usually the Keeper of the Seals, or the retiring Prime Minister.

arbitrary disregard for it was, from the English point of view, an unconstitutional act. Yet contemporary records show that amid all the passion roused by this *coup d'état*, it was rarely suggested that the President had acted unconstitutionally, though his action was notoriously due to the advice of a small band of irresponsible counsellors unknown to the Constitution. Indeed, Gambetta, the rival champion of MacMahon in this crisis, said in all sincerity on the morrow of the event, "No one can deny the President's loyalty to the Constitution."¹ This indicates precisely the difference between the English and the French conception of loyalty to a Constitution.² The British sovereign might adhere to the letter of the written law, and yet be guilty of unconstitutional conduct. The chief of the French Executive, so long as he adheres to the letter of the written law, is not accounted disloyal to the Constitution, even by his enemies.

The turbulence of the debates at Versailles, when the Chamber re-assembled, did not favour calm juridical discussion, and few of the speakers³ referred to the constitutional aspect of the crisis. Gambetta during the adjournment had said: "The struggle is more profound than a mere combat for the Constitution. The struggle is between the old castes, with their privileges of a bygone regime,—between the agents of the theocracy of Rome, and the sons of 1789."⁴ This language, stripped of rhetoric, expressed the opinion of both parties in the contest. The Seize Mai was a political and not a constitutional crisis. The question at issue was not whether the President of the Republic should have the right to override the majority of the popular chamber, but whether the Republic should continue to exist. That the Republicans have never, during their subsequent predominance, amended the Constitution by limiting the

¹ Chambre des Députés, 17 Mai 1877.

² Certain constitutional authorities of our colonies do not take quite this view. They justify a governor, the representative of the British sovereign, who would dismiss a ministry possessing a majority in the representative Assembly, provided that he believed that the electorate would give a majority to the new minister called to office, and this practice seems to be justified, as constitutional, by Secretaries of State.

³ M. Jules Ferry dealt with it: Chambre des Députés, 18 Juin 1877.

⁴ Discours à la Députation de la Jeunesse des écoles: 1 Juin 1877.

powers of the President in dismissing or choosing his Ministers, shows that the Seize Mai was an attempt to change the political form of government rather than to enlarge the prerogative of the Chief of the State. The comparative experience of the methods of Marshal MacMahon and of Louis Napoleon proved to France that a *coup d'état*, to be effective, requires armed force which no constitutional enactments can guard against.

The pretension assumed by the President to dismiss a Minister for carrying or accepting a resolution in the popular chamber bears little analogy to the right of veto on legislation exercised by certain constitutional rulers. The President has, however, a power resembling that of veto. He can, after the passing of a bill in the two chambers, by a message to them, insist on a further deliberation on it.¹ This right cannot be applied to any measure revising the Constitution, and therefore affecting the President's own position, as the National Assembly convoked for a congress of revision is dissolved the moment it has voted its amendments of the Constitution. Thus, as a message cannot be addressed to a body which has ceased to exist, the President has no means of demanding a second deliberation upon measures relating to himself.

The *coup d'état* of the Seize Mai was condemned by all Europe from its inception. Even had it produced a reactionary majority it is hard to see what would have been done with it. The Comte de Chambord had still six years to live, so a Restoration was not practical, and MacMahon had neither the ambition nor the unscrupulousness to institute a military dictatorship. Its chief effects were to prove again to the country the incompetence of the Monarchists; and also, by associating in the public mind the Church with this abortive attempt, to provoke reprisals from the anti-clericals when they got the upper hand, the bitterness of which still lingers in France. After the submission of Marshal MacMahon, Gambetta sagaciously expressed the wish that he should be allowed to complete his term, so that the peaceful transmission of his powers to a duly

¹ L.C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 7.

elected successor might display the advantage of Republican rule over the other regimes of the century, under which all reigns but one had come to a violent end.¹ But the old soldier found himself isolated; and in January 1879 he made a difference of opinion on a military question an excuse for resigning. M. Jules Grévy, the President of the Chamber, was elected to succeed him by the National Assembly, which thus met for the first time under the provisions of the Constitutional Law.²

III

M. Grévy's first presidential term presents few points of constitutional interest. Abuse of prerogative was not to be feared from the grave leader of the bar, who, under the Empire, had been pointed out to young Republicans as the author of the amendment to the Constitution of 1848, which, if carried, would have prevented the Coup d'État of 1851.³ After that event his abstention from militant politics, and on the 4th of September 1870 his refusal to join the Government of National Defence because it was the offspring of revolution, showed him to be a person of calm ambitions. But though, even before the war, he was spoken of as a possible President of the Republic, he only attained the high office by a series of chances, being chosen on the refusal of M. Dufaure to be nominated, practically on the proposition of Gambetta. The latter, indisposed to hurry to the Presidency of the Republic, was ready to accept the Premiership of M. Grévy's first ministry; but assured by his rivals, of whom the new President of the Republic was the most jealous, that time was not yet ripe for him nominally to direct the affairs of the country, he accepted the Presidency of the Chamber. In that position he wielded immense power without responsibility; but it was a situation of self-effacement, and M. Grévy's intrigues, which kept him there, form a striking instance of the influence of

¹ Discours à Romans, 18 Septembre 1878.

² L. C. 25 Février 1875, art. 2, 7.

³ The amendment was to the effect that the Second Republic should not have a President, the executive power being delegated by the National Assembly to the President of the Council of Ministers.

a President of the Republic on the destinies of France. Some there are who ascribe to this initial policy of M. Grévy the errors, the divisions, and the scandals which have marked the history of the Republic, of which, then intact and of clean record, the vigour and popularity of Gambetta might have been the columns of support and adornment. Such a lament implies that had Gambetta been given a free hand to govern France he would not have died. Thus it falls into the category of regrets which attend the cutting off in their prime of all lives of potential rulers in a land of revolutions, and are as futile as those inspired by the untimely tombs of the Duc de Berry and of the Duc d'Orléans, of the King of Rome and of the Prince Imperial. M. Grévy's first three Prime Ministers—MM. Waddington, de Freycinet, and Ferry—were men of high ability. But by deliberately keeping out of office, until an unfavourable moment, the one man capable of uniting a strong majority, the President of the Republic perpetuated the vicious system, no longer inevitable as it had been under the confused regime of Marshal MacMahon, of short-lived ministries representing groups.

In thus effacing a personality which gave promise of overshadowing every other in France, M. Grévy was aided by Gambetta's rivals. The astute veteran, who had bided his time since 1848, thought that as the office, the creation of which he had opposed a generation before, had by the irony of chance devolved on him, it would be ingratitude to fate if he did not occupy it for the rest of his days. The Republic was quite willing, when Gambetta was dead, that M. Grévy should be President for life, the system of short-lived ministries having effectually discredited in turn the reputation of every prominent politician. In December 1885 the National Assembly met under the provision of the Constitution that a month before the legal term of the powers of the President the two Chambers shall unite to fill the office for another seven years.¹ The question was raised of the competence of members to discuss the candidates, there being no statutory regulations controlling the

¹ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 2, et 16 Juillet 1875, art. 3.

procedure of the Congress. It was ruled that the sole function of the National Assembly, convoked to elect a President of the Republic, was to give its votes without debate or discourse; and M. Grévy was reappointed, practically without opposition.

M. Grévy commenced his second term of office on January 31, 1886, with every prospect of ending his days as President of the Republic. But at that very moment he had about him two men of widely different types, one in the Council Chamber and the other on his domestic hearth, who were destined to make abortive the experiment of a second septennate vested in the same hands. He had entrusted the forming of his tenth ministry to M. de Freycinet, who thus becoming Prime Minister for the third time gave the portfolio of War to General Boulanger. The apparition in politics of that phenomenal figure caused a complete revolution in the spirit of the French population, which, restless and ready for change, would have remodelled the form of government and the functions of its President, had its new hero possessed qualities adequate to the occasion offered to him. The acclamation of the Minister of War by the people of Paris on the national fête; his popularity in the army; the jealousies of his colleagues in two ministries; his passage from the position of nominee of the Radicals to that of protector of the Royalists, all contributed to agitate the public mind. Consequently when he came into conflict with the Government, and moreover declared for revision of the Constitution, the growing discontent regarding the Presidency of the Republic seemed likely, with his aid, to overwhelm that office. M. Grévy, in spite of his re-election, was not popular. His distaste for ostentation, and his thrifty mode of life were ascribed to a frugal parsimony, which, praiseworthy in the French peasant stock from which he sprang, and a chief source of the national wealth, is unbecoming when unduly practised by the official head of a great and brilliant nation. While the dazzling contrast of the unofficial leader was aggravating the discontent of the critics, who declared that the President was amassing a fortune out of the public income bestowed upon him to embellish his office, it

was discovered that the decoration of the Legion of Honour had been made an object of traffic. One of the persons most implicated in the scandal was the son-in-law of M. Grévy, M. Wilson, a conspicuous Republican deputy and a former Under-Secretary of State, who resided at the Élysée and made use of the presidential residence as a bureau for his transactions.

Consequently public opinion, which was brought home to M. Grévy by the refusal of successive politicians to form a new ministry so long as he retained his post, forced him to resign two years after his second election. The date of his message to the Chambers, announcing his reluctant decision, might have reminded General Boulanger, philandering at that crisis in a village inn in Auvergne, that the chance of a *coup d'état* does not recur on every 2nd of December.¹ But though that incomplete hero declined to attempt the seizure of the supreme power then or on subsequent favourable occasions, the election of a new President was materially influenced by his disturbing presence in the land. There were three prominent candidates: M. de Freycinet, thrice, and M. Jules Ferry, twice Prime Minister, and M. Floquet, the Radical President of the Chamber. M. Ferry, in spite of his intolerant policy towards the Church, had failed to retain the favour of the Extreme Left, and the military reverses in Tonkin under his second Ministry had made his unpopularity general. His old colleague, M. de Freycinet was a more adroit politician, and these two competitors were said to be united by a bond stronger than that of official association—their former jealousy of Gambetta. Before his death neither had supported him, but when his welcome disappearance cleared the way for smaller men, they borrowed his doctrine and became his rival successors. M. Floquet had not yet been a Minister. He had been Préfet of the Seine under Gambetta, and was a kinsman of M. Ferry; but it was as a Radical leader that he had been conspicuous ever since the day he left the National

¹ The advocate-general, in his indictment of General Boulanger before the High Court (August 9, 1889), charged him with conspiring in Paris on December 2, 1887, while, as a matter of fact, he was on that date hiding with his mistress at the Hôtel des Marronniers at Royat.

Assembly in 1871 rather than support the Versailles Government in suppressing the Commune.

It is important to notice the prominence of these candidates for the Presidency at the first contested election for that exalted post, as displaying how the attainment of political eminence under the Third Republic invariably entails the loss of public esteem and the ill-will of political colleagues. M. Ferry seemed to have the strongest chances, for a curious reason. As he was supported by the moderate Republicans the adherence of the Reactionaries would have assured him the requisite absolute majority in the Congress; and the Reactionaries were willing to vote for him, in the belief that his election would produce civil war, so bitter was the hatred of the Radicals for him in the Chamber, at the Hôtel de Ville, and in the street. General Boulanger's wish was to secure a President who would recall him to the Ministry of War, where he could mature his plans; and M. de Freycinet and M. Floquet were both so certain of being chosen that each secretly intimated to him the position he would hold after the election. M. Clemenceau, who till then had wasted his brilliant talents as a destroyer and a maker of ministries, now further glorified his faculty of deposition and of investiture by deciding, in the language of English sport, that the great prize should be won not by a favourite but by an outsider.¹

The Radicals, seeing that they could not carry M. de Freycinet, their candidate after the retirement of M. Floquet, accepted the advice of M. Clemenceau. Consequently, at the National Assembly on December 3, 1887, after an indecisive first ballot, M. Carnot was elected by three-fourths of the suffrages of the electoral college. A legend arose that the Assembly, filled with shame for the iniquity of M. Wilson, called to mind an act of probity of M. Carnot when he was Minister of Finance, and

¹ "Tout plutôt que la guerre civile," répliqua M. Clemenceau, "prenons donc un outsider, Brisson ou Carnot." This is the version of M. Clemenceau's words given in *Les Couloirs du Boulangisme*. That work is not an accurate history, but I have heard from a person present that this was the expression used. That prominence in politics is a bar to the Presidency was again shown in 1899, when neither M. Méline, M. Brisson, nor M. Dupuy, the most conspicuous Republican leaders, had a chance of succeeding M. Faure.

wonder-struck at the spectacle of virtue unsullied by the contact of politicians, hailed him as the upright man to save the civic honour. The story cannot be substantiated. No doubt the act of integrity was quoted and utilised as a proof of M. Carnot's fitness to hold high office in corrupt times; but, as a matter of history, his presidency of the French Republic was conceived in a newspaper office by a conclave of wire-pullers and journalists who had little sympathy for his virtues.

When M. Carnot's election became inevitable, not only was his high character recognised but also the eminence of his name. So when the choice of the Assembly was announced, its members arose and saluted with cheers the father of the new President, himself a senator,—old Hippolyte Carnot, acclaimed at Versailles as the son of the Organiser of Victory, handing on a famous name to adorn the chief magistracy fallen into disrepute, and thus to raise the credit of France before Europe.

Not that hereditary military genius or ambition was imputed to M. Sadi Carnot. The very suspicion of it would have alarmed the Assembly, already perturbed at the ominous popularity of a uniform. Indeed, the politician chiefly responsible for the choice cynically declared that he had furthered the nomination of M. Carnot because of his "perfect insignificance." M. Clemenceau merely meant that the inheritor of a name not only renowned but appealing to democratic tradition had, when called to the Council of Ministers, performed his duties with self-effacing modesty, thus escaping the odium which is in France the swift penalty of conspicuousness. He was of the type which, happily numerous, is the salvation of the country, though rarely found in political circles—the type of Frenchman never talked about in the newspapers—industrious, cultivated, scrupulous, and unobtrusive. He suddenly attained the supreme power at a moment when, owing to the causes of M. Grévy's fall, it had become the practice to criticise publicly the most intimate details of the lives of the inmates of the Élysée; but under the scrutiny of would-be libellers he afforded no occasion for reproach. The years that he was President of the Republic were unexampled in France,

even at times of revolution, for the bitterness of political passion and the ferocious licence of the press. The Decorations scandal, the Boulangist movement, and the Panama affair filled the entire period with scurrility and recrimination. If a political leader offended an opponent the whole of his past existence was laid bare ; and strong men were driven from public life, not for errors or crimes committed in their public capacity or condemned by tribunals of the law, but because they had incurred the fury of a journalist who disinterred the secret of a youthful offence.

To have occupied unscathed the most conspicuous position in the land, while it was swept by tempestuous seasons of disloyalty and of delation, was a striking testimony to the blamelessness of a life which was singularly consistent. While the nephew of Bonaparte was unsteadily throned at the Tuileries, the grandson of Lazare Carnot, commencing his career as an engineer like his ancestor, had established his first simple home on a Savoyard roadside, in the region once a trophy of the Organiser of Victory and now almost the sole title to glory of the Second Empire. His subsequent passage through ministries where office was unblushingly regarded as a source of wealth or a stepping-stone to dictatorship¹ brought out the same qualities of diligence, conscientiousness, and modesty which he had displayed when building bridges at Annecy. As President of the Republic the worst faults his critics could find in him were his precision of dress, or his ceremonious rigidity of form, which were only expressions of his desire to fill his office with becoming dignity and never to depart from constitutional reserve. M. Carnot was not perhaps a great man, but he was the worthy bearer of a great name, thus showing himself the possessor of a faculty rare in all countries.

In the year before his death there were two ministerial crises in which M. Carnot was accused of having taken an excessive part. It was the sixth year of his Presidency ; and the question

¹ It was during the third Freycinet administration in 1886, in which M. Carnot was for the second time Minister of Finance, that the Minister of Public Works (an office which M. Carnot had held in two previous Cabinets) committed the acts in connection with the Panama Loans which subsequently resulted in his being sent to penal servitude ; and General Boulanger was in the same Government, for the first time Minister of War.

of his re-election being already debated, the opponents of the renewal of his power pointed out that one disadvantage of a long term of office was that it induced the President to impose his personal views in the conduct of affairs. In the spring of 1893 the Ribot Cabinet fell. As the general elections were to take place in August, the chances were that the Cabinet chosen in April would last until then, the average life of a ministry being eight months. Thus the new Minister of the Interior would probably "make the elections," a process which, involving the manipulation of all the centralised machinery of France, is attractive to politicians. The previous elections, in 1889, when Boulangerism was still a force, had been adroitly supervised by M. Constans, and the friends of that enigmatic statesman pressed his name on the notice of the President, who, disregarding them, called upon M. Dupuy to form a cabinet. The friends of M. Constans compared M. Carnot with Louis XIV., and M. Dupuy, a schoolmaster turned politician, superintended the elections, which took place amid the profound indifference of the nation.

The result of the polls threw little light upon the feeling of the electorate, regarding either the President or his Ministers, or the legislative needs of the country. The Dupuy Cabinet, having survived almost the traditional eight months, was defeated, for no particular reason, on the reassembling of the new Chamber, and resigned. The crisis which ensued was prolonged owing, it was said, to the attitude of M. Carnot. He was accused of opposing the will of the majorities in the two Chambers in trying to call to power a ministry agreeable to certain groups whose votes he wished to secure in the National Assembly at the presidential election a year later. Abroad, as well as in France, the comment was made that, contrary to the usage in constitutional governments, the head of the French Executive seemed not only to have a policy of its own, but to claim the right to impose it on his ministers. That the President was intriguing with a view to re-election we shall see was false. That he was essaying to dictate the composition of a ministry was probably true, but only in the sense that, in the formation of his ninth Cabinet in six years he

felt that his experience made him the most competent person in France to give general advice on the choice of ministers likeliest to serve the interests of the nation.

The comments made abroad on M. Carnot's alleged unconstitutional attitude showed that outside France the impression prevails that parliamentary government in that country bears some resemblance to the British institution after which it was modelled. After a general election it might be thought that the defeat of a Prime Minister in the new Chamber signified that the electorate was discontented with him and with his policy, and desired to see another statesman at the head of affairs, whose name, having been re-echoed in every polling-booth, was indicated to the Chief of the Executive. As a matter of fact, the constituencies, excepting at an election of quasi-plebiscitary character, such as those conducted by Gambetta before and after the *Seize Mai*, or such as that of 1889 might have been but for General Boulanger's flight, never take into consideration the name of any man nor the merits of any policy. During the elections of 1893 no one ever heard of the Prime Minister M. Dupuy or of his successor, M. Casimir-Périer, any more than of his predecessors, MM. Ribot and Loubet. When again M. Dupuy was dismissed from office on the assembling of the new Chamber, it did not mean that he had lost the confidence of the country, for he had never had it in the sense in which the word is understood in England. The country was neither pleased nor displeased either when he resigned office in November 1893, or when he became Prime Minister again in May 1894.

Each successive ministry in France, under the present regime, is only a temporary expedient doomed to give way in most cases to another similar combination a few months later. Therefore, far from it being unconstitutional for a President to give the Prime Minister of his choice the benefit of his wisdom in the selection of his colleagues, it seems to be distinctly his duty to act as M. Carnot did. At the same time it is futile duty, for whatever quarter of the Chamber a ministry is recruited from, and whatever influences are used to include one group of politicians or to

exclude another, the result is the same; the ministry, in nine cases out of ten lasts for less than a year, and the identical process has then to be repeated. Unless, therefore, a President contemplates a *coup d'état*, a project which the most reckless of M. Carnot's critics never imputed to him, he would study his own comfort better by consenting to remain a passive figure-head raised above the petty strife of recurring ministerial crises.

When M. Casimir-Périer finally consented to form a ministry on the sixth anniversary of M. Carnot's election, another charge was brought against the latter, which is worth noticing in our examination of the nature of the President's attributes. We have seen that Frenchmen have reason for believing that the tenure of high ministerial office is the ruin of reputation and of popularity. M. Casimir-Périer, whose election to the presidency of the Chamber showed that he had favourably impressed his colleagues with his hereditary abilities, was marked out as a possible President of the Republic. So when M. Carnot pressed upon him the Premier-ship, the sagacious exclaimed that this was the way that M. Grévy had got rid of Gambetta. But the uncharitable sages who imputed similar guile to M. Carnot, only showed how valueless are precedent and analogy in French political forecast. M. Casimir-Périer became Prime Minister, and failed to remain in office for even half a year. Yet a month after his dismissal this defeated Minister was elected to succeed the President, struck down by an assassin. It remained for one of his colleagues to clear the memory of M. Carnot from the imputation of an ignoble wile. M. Spuller, Gambetta's Under-Secretary at the Quai d'Orsay in 1881, became Minister of Education in the Casimir-Périer Cabinet, after declining to form a ministry himself. Thus brought into confidential relations with the President, he heard from his lips that he had resolved to refuse a nomination for a second term, on constitutional as well as on personal grounds. These words, spoken privily and not for public effect, were given to the world at the moment when, had he been let live, M. Carnot

would have resumed the character of a private citizen, which he knew how to illustrate as well as the highest civic rank.¹

IV

Three days after M. Carnot's murder at Lyons M. Casimir-Périer became President of the Republic. Although the sudden vacancy in June 1894 was not anticipated, the approaching term of the septennate was preparing men's minds for a presidential election, and it was thought that if M. Carnot did not stand M. Casimir-Périer would be the strongest candidate. No one was surprised, therefore, that he obtained an absolute majority in the National Assembly at the first ballot. M. Brisson indeed on this occasion secured nearly two hundred votes, and the Socialists who supported that austere politician afterwards denounced the new President as the elect of the Reactionaries; but if all the Reactionary votes had been transferred to M. Brisson, M. Casimir-Périer would still have headed the poll. He thus commenced his Presidency, the nominee not of a mere coalition but supported by the majority of Republicans.

Like M. Carnot the new President was the representative of a distinguished name. A family which in our country had been eminent and wealthy as long as the Périers have been in France, would have attained a high rank in the peerage. When, before the Revolution, they became great landowners there were English families now of ducal rank, only just emerging from the class of country squires. The owner of the Château of Vizille, where the Assembly of the États du Dauphiné in 1788 preluded the meeting of the States-General at Versailles, had a brother who died an archbishop under Louis XVIII., one son who was a peer of France, and another who was Prime Minister under Louis Philippe. The son of that statesman was an ambassador, and was the father of the President of 1894. Nevertheless, such are the peculiarities

¹ *Au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique*, par Eugene Spuller, 1894.

of the French social scale that this family, which was of high consideration when the ancestors of the nobility of the First Empire and of the Restoration were in many cases of humble condition, was regarded as being the type and pattern of the French bourgeoisie.

The French bourgeois has fallen on evil days. After having made the Revolution of 1789, and repeating it, in miniature, in 1830 with ampler profit to himself, he no longer enjoys public prestige at the close of the nineteenth century. Descendants of the revolutionary possessors of national property, and even of the men of the July Monarchy, sometimes style themselves "sons of the crusaders." Their less prosperous kinsmen, who regard politics as a swift road to fortune, court universal suffrage in the guise of "sons of peasants." The scions of the middle classes, ennobled by Napoleon and the restored Bourbons, are as disdainful of the bourgeoisie as are the representatives of the courtiers and the lawyers of the old regime; while at the other end of the scale the Radical Socialists, like the Anarchists, use "bourgeois" as a term of reprobation to designate men who do not get their living by manual toil or by agitation. A "labour" member of the House of Commons once related to me his experiences at a Trade Union Congress in Paris. He said that he had gone to France entirely ignorant of the language, but to his last day he should never forget one word repeated in every sentence of the French delegates' speeches with every intonation of hatred and contempt—the word "bourgeois." This estimable Englishman, though representing thousands of working men, was in appearance and in mode of thought a typical bourgeois, from the French point of view—as dissimilar to his as the Carmagnole, with which his French colleagues terrified him, was to the pious exercises which he was wont to conduct at his Sunday School at home.

It is necessary to understand this point, which will be referred to again, in order to comprehend the force of the attacks upon M. Casimir-Périer. From the morrow of his election, the possession of an honoured name, associated with

the conquest of popular liberty, was turned into a reproach. It is typical of the insignificance into which the French noblesse has fallen, that the old denunciation of "aristocrat" was rarely used by his assailants. Occasionally a sneer was aimed at his kinship with persons bearing titles, or at his support by the Royalists in the Congress; or a suggestion was heard, that as the Orleanists had become Legitimists, so would the grandson of Louis Philippe's Minister revive the Ancient Regime. But for the most part the representative of a family proud of a century and a half of high renown in the bourgeoisie, was made the victim of the artificial antipathy with which the modern school of socialism regards that class. M. Casimir-Périer was not, however, denounced by theoretical objectors to the bourgeois principle solely because of his ancestral connection with the middle-class Monarchy of July. He was one of the owners of a coal-field notorious for its strikes; and it was as a capitalist that day after day he was made the object of attacks moulded by the Socialist leaders in form to please every sect of discontent, from the Anti-Semites and anarchists of the century's end to the inheritors of the doctrine of the Jacobins.

M. Casimir-Périer was the victim of the vain theory of the impersonality of the President. His predecessor, though he studied to efface himself in his office, could not make it forgotten for a day that he was the grandson of "Père la Victoire." In like manner the grandson of the Minister of 1831 was marked out as a possible President long before the tragedy of Lyons, because he too bore a historic name with conspicuous force of character. It was therefore by a curious inconsistency that the possession of that name chiefly made his position untenable. Beneath an exterior of resolute sturdiness, he had not the calm temperament, free from self-consciousness, such as M. Carnot had, essential for the chief of a democracy which is not strikingly qualified to use the privilege of unlicensed printing. His habit, therefore, of perusing the journals containing gross libels on his character

and incitements to violence on his person, kept constantly before his eyes the causes which might render him unpopular. He was driven into resigning his office after six months' tenure of it, because it was evident that, however constitutionally he discharged its functions, public opinion refused to contemplate the possibility of a President of the Republic being an impersonal head of the State. Whether he committed an unpatriotic blunder, or saved the country from civil war by hastily descending from the summit of Republican ambition as soon as he had attained it, we need not discuss. The probability is that his brief experience led him to the conclusion, not rare in France, that the Presidency is a vain office, and that within certain limits it does not matter who occupies it; but that in face of the national tendency to invest its occupant with distinctive attributes, it is better that it should be filled by a citizen of unemphatic character and unsensitive temperament.

Had the Chamber given him the support due to a constitutional Chief of the State from the representatives of the nation, he might have endured until his persecutors were weary. But the popular House gave him to understand that it had no intention of protecting the President from outrage. For defaming M. Casimir-Périer in a Socialist print a journalist had been tried and sent to prison. Forthwith a turbulent quarter of Paris sent him to Parliament, and a motion was proposed in the Chamber for his release, involving the reversal of a sentence duly passed by a judicial tribunal. The motion, instead of being opposed by all excepting the small Socialist group, was defeated by only a slender majority. It was not merely a disposition to encourage contempt for the Chief of the State that induced the Chamber so nearly to vote impunity to his defamer. It is the constant tendency of the French legislature to arrogate the functions of a Convention and to override the principle of the separation of the powers—a sure sign of the unsuitableness of parliamentary institutions for the French national character. A further attempt in the same direction, when the majority of the Chamber voted

for the revision of a judgment of the Conseil d'État in the matter of certain State agreements with the railway companies, caused the retirement of the second Dupuy ministry. M. Casimir-Périer seized the occasion of this crisis to address to the Presidents of the Houses of Legislature a letter resigning his high office, indicating some of the reasons why he found its further custody intolerable.¹ The general purport of the message was that the President had too many responsibilities and not enough powers. The Socialists' comment upon it was that there was logically no middle course between the abolition of the presidency and its conversion into a dictatorship; a dilemma which would be irresistible if logic had any relation with the science of government.

Even when a presidential election is imminent nothing occurs resembling the preliminary campaign of candidates for the presidency of the United States. When, therefore, a vacancy suddenly occurred six years before the country anticipated a change, to fill it in forty-eight hours was necessarily a matter of accident. M. Brisson was at the disposal of the nation for the fourth time, but the belief that he was now favoured by the Socialists did not improve his chances. The most serious competitors seemed to be M. Waldeck-Rousseau and M. Godefroy Cavaignac. The former, an advocate of talent, had been called to the Ministry of the Interior at an early age by Gambetta, when older men refused to serve in the Grand Ministère, and again in the second Ferry Cabinet, which survived the phenomenal span of two years. Subsequently he had withdrawn from active politics, and having been professionally retained in the Panama trials, it was thought that he possibly possessed, for an impartial Chief of the State, too intimate a knowledge of the character of politicians who might be designated for ministerial rank. M. Cavaignac, had he been chosen to succeed M. Carnot and M. Casimir-Périer, would have established a tradition that the presidency was reserved for members of dynasties which had served the commonwealth since the

¹ January 15, 1895.

Revolution. The grandson, like M. Carnot, of a regicide member of the Convention, he was the son of the General who had his hour of glory and popularity before his defeat by Louis Bonaparte at the plebiscite for the presidency in 1848. As a boy he had dramatically defied the Second Empire when, at a public distribution of prizes, he refused to accept a laurel wreath from the hands of the Prince Imperial. Had the Presidency been vacant two years earlier he would have been called by acclamation to fill it. During the debates on the Panama scandal in 1893, when public opinion was discomforted by the withdrawal from justice of the prominent politicians involved in it, he made a speech at the Palais Bourbon expressing with such sober eloquence the prevailing sentiment of outraged honesty of the French nation, that the Chamber with enthusiasm ordered it to be placarded in every commune of France.¹ The triumph was too conspicuous. Had M. Carnot's meritorious probity when Minister of Finance received equal attention and applause, it would have drawn down upon him the jealousy which closed the gates of the Élysée upon M. Cavaignac.

V

The choice of the National Assembly, convoked at Versailles on January 17, 1895, fell on M. Félix Faure. It is probable that on the previous New Year's Day, even in Paris, in the heart of political life, not one person in a thousand knew him even by name, although he was Minister of Marine. It does not follow in France that because a public man is unknown to the public he is therefore obscure. It is true that in the frequent changes of Cabinets many politicians, who flit through ministerial office without leaving a trace of their passage, are obscure men; but aptitude and talent in Ministers are sometimes unrecognised, so profound is the indifference of the French public for the machinery of government. M. Faure belonged to a class unfortunately rare in France, that of the successful and intelligent

¹ February 8, 1893.

man of business, who takes an active part in politics. With a few well-known exceptions, the representatives in Parliament of the great commercial centres of France are generally doctors, lawyers, professors, and journalists ; but the electors of Havre are wont to delegate their interests to their substantial citizens, and if M. Félix Faure was unknown to the French nation he enjoyed the best graces of his fellow-townsmen. Eight months before his elevation to the supreme power (though twelve years earlier he had been an Under-Secretary), he had never attained Cabinet rank, which is not difficult of access under the Third Republic. Perhaps one ought rather to say that it is difficult of access for business men of solid qualities who help to keep France in the van of nations, and countervail the passing pranks of professional politicians in the ministries.

The sudden apparition of a President of this unwonted type, who represented no dynastic hierarchy like his immediate predecessors, no doctrinaire tradition like M. Grévy, who had neither the military prestige of Marshal MacMahon nor the European renown of M. Thiers, took the fancy of the public. An agreeable presence, gracing a blithe alertness in performing his novel functions with unaffected joy, made M. Faure a popular hero before the detractors of M. Casimir-Périer had time to realise that he was a member of the same oppressive and selfish class. The antipathies of the French public are short-lived, excepting in the case of persons held responsible for military disaster,—like Napoleon III., and, in a smaller way, M. Jules Ferry. Had M. Casimir-Périer not resigned, the violence of his persecutors would have caused a reaction in his favour. The daily baiting of the President had become wearisome, and the populace of Paris was ready to beckon on the nation to hail with enthusiasm any occupant of the presidential chair. For the yearning of the French to acclaim a chief is chronic.

When the improvised popularity of the new President became a national creed, the dethroners of his predecessor felt that their position as leaders of thought was imperilled by the ascendancy of another bourgeois. The meaning of that term is less definite than

when, under the old regime, it connoted the men of the great mediate class, which, without privilege or rank, had office and wealth. Still it has in modern times a signification much clearer than any approximate English synonym. Now that the noblesse no longer exists, and the clergy is no longer an estate, while the passage of the whole nation through the army has abolished the military caste, every one is a bourgeois who does not gain his living by the labour of his hands : though Socialist writers extend, as we have seen, the non-bourgeois ranks in order to include themselves, by defining the bourgeois as one who does not earn his bread either by manual toil or by agitation. But at whichever end of the social scale we artificially limit the bourgeois class, either by counting as proletarians politicians who utilise the blouse as a lucrative symbol rather than as an article of apparel, or by adopting the fiction that an order of nobles still exists in France, no elimination can ever exclude from the bourgeoisie the respectable section of society which M. Félix Faure has illustrated. This would seem to be obvious to all the world. But when the Radicals saw that a capitalist and an employer of labour was winning the good graces of all grades of society it was clear that if his success could not be checked it ought to be expounded.

An authorised spokesman of the Radical party was M. Pochon, the deputy for Bourg-en-Bresse, and he had a further title to speak in the name of the population as President of the Conseil-Général of the Department of the Ain, which stretches from Lyons to Geneva. At its first meeting after the election of M. Faure he thus moralised :—"We have the right from past experience to beware of the bourgeoisie, which has learned nothing from the lessons of this century. It was no longer possible for us Republicans to allow that class to resume the direction of public affairs, after our unlucky essay with a President whose family was known to history. That was why the democracy chose in its own ranks the successor of M. Casimir-Périer, convinced that M. Félix Faure would never belie his origin."¹

Now a Frenchman who denies that M. Félix Faure is a

¹ *Conseil-Général de l'Ain, Séance de l'ouverture, 22 Avril 1895.*

member of the bourgeoisie is capable of anything. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that the stern democrat, who boasted that the people in their distrust of the bourgeois class had elevated one of themselves to the chief magistracy, was not only a bourgeois himself but had done all in his power to prevent M. Faure's election. At Versailles M. Faure was opposed by M. Pochon and his group as a danger to the democracy, and they voted to a man for a genuine son of toil, M. Brisson, whose father was an attorney at Bourges and who was himself a member of the Parisian bar. The malcontents, unable to carry their own candidate, and knowing that the country was tired of presidential unpopularity, accepted with disingenuous grace the success obtained by the new President as the triumph of their doctrine. It is therefore necessary to examine closely M. Faure's proletarian titles.

The timorous, who dread the advent to power of the democracy, will be reassured at knowing that the Radical-Socialists proclaim M. Faure to be by his life and origin its incarnation. His parents, though not rich, had not to labour with their hands, and the future President, instead of being educated at a public elementary school as befitted a son of the people, was sent first to a suburban college of some pretension, and later to England to learn the language. On his return, being apprenticed to a tanner at Amboise, he wore a workman's costume, as the sons of the rich often do when learning a business practically. He then married the heiress of a wealthy man who died a senator, and placing his capital at Havre, he attained social and commercial rank in that seaport. After the war he took a valiant part in the suppression of the Commune with a vigour not calculated to endear him to the revilers of the bourgeoisie.

The theoretical objectors to the bourgeois principle know very well that the strict application of their theories might uncomfortably affect their own position. They, therefore, arbitrarily label this public man as a bourgeois and that as a proletarian, without reference to his social rank or even his political views. A similar process was practised a hundred years before in Brittany, when the mere denunciation as a Chouan or a Jacobin, according

as the Blues or Whites prevailed in the region, was a sentence of death. M. Casimir-Périer, its most conspicuous victim in recent times, was driven to suicide rather than to execution by the new philosophers with their new definition.

All this tendency to classify each individual President is additional proof that it is contrary to the instincts of the nation to regard the chief of the State as an impersonal figure representing France.¹ M. Félix Faure was the first President of the Republic who had no tradition connected with his name; but from the morrow of his election the Parisian press and public began to invest him with legend. The Provençal origin of his family provoked comparisons with that of M. Thiers. Spirited controversies arose as to the precise site of his modest birthplace in an industrial quarter of the capital. His suburban schoolmaster was made the subject of monographs. His practical method of learning the trade of a fellmonger produced the myth that he had begun life as a journeyman tanner, and portraits of a needlessly toiled-stained workman were rapturously circulated; while for the satisfaction of the prosperous classes, and to show how fitted he was to impress foreign potentates with the amenity of France, anecdotes were related of his sporting prowess in Hungary, where his affability had inspired an innkeeper to foretell a brilliant future for him. In fact, all the lore that is formed around the founder of a dynasty was made ready as though this respectable merchant of Havre were a new Bonaparte.

VI

Is it not possible that a country governed for centuries and grown great under the absolute sway of kings, which it only

¹ M. Carnot had even to rebuke his fellow-citizens, who assumed the attitude of respectful subjects on his presidential journeys. At Chambéry, on September 4, 1892, the anniversary of the foundation of the Republic, M. Horteur, Deputy and Chairman of the Conseil-Général, having referred to him in laudatory terms, the President replied: "Je vous remercie infiniment de l'hommage que vous rendez à la République, mais vous me voyez un peu peiné des éloges particuliers que vous m'avez adressés. Il n'y a pas d'homme en France, il n'y a que des institutions." Nevertheless when five years later another President visited that unemotional city, I can testify that the solitary cry of the calm spectators was "Vive Félix Faure."

dispensed with to take refuge in the absolute rule of a military dictator, should realise that the Chief of the State does not govern. Thus we find the President of the Republic, in the performance of the functions prescribed for him by the written Constitution, in the anomalous position of a Chief of the State whose name is kept constantly before the public in a manner unknown in constitutional monarchies. At the same time he is subjected to unwritten restrictions of a puerile character intended to curb dictatorial aspirations, but only having the effect of attenuating the picturesqueness of Parisian life.

For example, the Constitution makes it his duty to preside at all national solemnities.¹ Yet if he were to repair to them in a gilded coach or on horseback and attired in a brilliant uniform, he would be accused of meditating a *coup d'état*, though the Constitution is silent regarding his apparel and his equipage. The President is thus constrained to review the troops at Longchamp on the 14th of July in a costume associated by Parisians, when they see it in the Bois de Boulogne, with the guests at the wedding feasts of the humbler classes, which are held in that pleasance. When, therefore, nature has endowed the chief of the State with an unimposing presence, which requires tradition or attire to make it impressive, the precautions thus taken to prevent an individual obtaining too great an influence over the crowd sometimes defeat themselves. For the French public delights in *panache*; so when the nodding plumes and the gold lace are seen adorning a minor actor in the spectacle, the mob, which would have had no idea of acclaiming with kingly titles the President merely because he was strikingly arrayed, turns to the prancing captain, crying, "This is the hero who should have led our summer holiday." That was the origin of the Boulangist legend in 1886, when the democracy of the capital turned its back on the notarial decorum of M. Grévy to hail the glittering uniform which a showy charger bore down the Champs Élysées at the head of the garrison of Paris.

The prerogative of receiving the diplomatic representatives of

¹ L. C. 25 Février 1875, art. 3.

the powers¹ is, on the other hand, a function, the importance of which the President is permitted to exaggerate. In a monarchy like England, when the sovereign receives a newly-accredited envoy, he is welcomed with impressive dignity and sometimes with a cordiality enhanced from the kinship of his august master with our royal family. But the only knowledge the British public has or desires to have of the event is gathered from the abrupt *Court Circular* which records it in a single line between the monarch's daily promenades and the knighting of a provincial mayor. In Republican France, after an ambassador has been received at the Élysée, every citizen who has a sou to buy a newspaper can read every detail of the ceremonial as well as the discourses exchanged between the President of the Republic and the envoy of his royal or imperial colleague. Their formality or warmth is discussed ; and the next day every politician from Brest to Marseilles founds forecasts of the future of Europe upon the recorded duration of the private conversation of the two personages, before the chief of the Protocole conveyed the new-comer back to his embassy. Again, it is the practice of crowned heads to notify to the rulers of the powers the births, marriages, and deaths which take place in their illustrious families. In our country no one outside the Court is aware of the custom. In the French Republic, each time that the President receives such a notification, the journals announce it, together with the text of his reply of congratulation or of condolence, in a way to habituate the public to the idea that the position in the European hierarchy of their first citizen is similar to that of the Emperor Francis Joseph or of King Leopold.

French is not the language of diplomacy for nothing ; and every citizen who takes an interest in affairs believes himself a master of the diplomatic art. Hence we find the opposite state of things to that which exists in England, where even in the capital the ardent politicians of the street, who criticise Home Secretaries and compare Chancellors of the Exchequer, know not the names of the envoys of France or of Germany within our

¹ L.C. 25 Février 1875, art. 3.

gates, save at seasons of international commotion. The Boulevards are in equal ignorance regarding the personality of the Ministers of the Interior and of Finance, except at epochs of "parliamentary scandal"; but the British or the Russian ambassador is a familiar Parisian institution.

This peculiar if superficial interest assumed by the French public in foreign relations is not sufficiently taken into account by those who deplore the extravagances of the inferior journals of the Boulevards in discussing exterior affairs. It is the same popular instinct which is flattered by all that tends to put the President of the Republic on an equality with the sovereigns of other European nations. By the Constitution of 1875¹ he has the power to negotiate and to ratify treaties; but treaties of peace and of commerce, and those which affect the finances of the State, are only effective after being voted by the two Chambers. It is to be observed that treaties of alliance are not included among those which require the ratification of the Chambers; and during the long period of "understanding" between France and Russia the question was constantly discussed in the journals whether President Carnot had or had not actually concluded a treaty with the Tsar. The highest authorities declare that a treaty concluded thus secretly without communication to Parliament could not be very serious in its scope, as there are few treaties of alliance which do not in their result affect the finances of the contracting states.² There can be no doubt that, whatever its danger, the idea of the President treating with a sovereign, and especially with an autocratic monarch, without referring to the Chambers is far from unpopular in France. The French love personal rule. Amid much that was unflattering to France in the Franco-Russian demonstrations

¹ L.C. 16 Juillet 1875, art. 8.

² Pierre, *Traité de droit politique* 'Des traités diplomatiques,' The leading case of a treaty concluded by the President of the French Republic, under the Constitution of 1875, without the ratification of Parliament, is that of the Treaty of Berlin. The contracting parties were Great Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, and Turkey. The Treaty bears the date of July 13, 1878; it was ratified by President MacMahon after the prorogation of the Chambers and promulgated in the *Journal Officiel* of September 6, 1878.

before the death of M. Carnot, a sentiment of national pride was made manifest in the exaggerated pictures circulated of the President grouped with the Tsar, whom he never saw, which suggested that the Chief of the Republic counted for as much in the union of the two powers as the autocrat of Russia. This idea followed M. Carnot to the tomb. Republicans, who believed that there was even then an alliance between France and Russia, and that it was advantageous for France, took pains to foster the legend that the transactions deemed to have brought France out of her isolation in Europe were the personal acts of the Chief of the State, who bore a name associated with bygone glories of French Republicanism carried beyond French frontiers.¹

It is not the practice of the French to speak impersonally of the "President," even on occasions when, as Chief of the State, he is treated with greater ceremony and deference than a constitutional sovereign. When M. Carnot returned to Paris from his summer sojourns at Fontainebleau, or when M. Faure came from Havre to preside at a meeting of the Cabinet, it has been the practice for the President of the Council and other ministers to be in attendance at the railway terminus; though the English sovereign, when paying even a State visit to her capital, is, on alighting from the train, content with the welcome of the station-master. It is to be observed in the published record of these occasions that the minister is generally designated by his office, while the President of the Republic is invariably referred to by name. Moreover his physiognomy, as well as his

¹ On the monument erected in memory of President Carnot at Nolay (Côte d'or), the birthplace of his grandfather the Organiser of Victory, eight dates and names of places are inscribed thus: "Limoges, 1837: Le Mans, 1870: Nolay, 1871: Versailles, 1887: Paris, 1889: Cronstadt, 1891: Toulon, 1893: Lyon, 1894," and they are said to summarise his life and achievements. Together with incidents in which he took the chief part, such as his birth, his death, and his succession to the Presidency, comes "Cronstadt, 1891"—a reference to the visit of the French fleet to a Russian port, which took place during the presidency of M. Carnot, while he was never within a thousand miles of the spot. It was supposed to be the first act of the Franco-Russian Alliance concluded by the President; and the visit of a French squadron to Russian waters was thus treated as a personal act of the President,—as a visit by proxy. The inauguration of this monument was an official ceremony presided over by a minister in September 1895.

name and actions, is officially impressed on the imagination of every citizen of France, by means more effective than the unressembling effigies struck on coinage whereby loyal peoples are deceived regarding royal lineaments. If a humble subject of the Queen of England wishes to know the veritable features of his sovereign, he must purchase at his own cost her likeness. In France the State forces every peasant and artisan to look upon that of the President each time he votes at an election, or marries a wife, or registers a birth, in the *mairie*, which is the centre of local life in rural villages and crowded towns alike. After the new President has been escorted back from Versailles to Paris, the first act of the Minister of the Interior is to approach his new master with a humble prayer that he will cause his portrait to be taken in order that it may be reproduced, distributed, and exposed in the forty thousand communes of France and Algeria.

VII

It is a curious lesson in the vicissitudes of France and of her governors to visit, in a provincial *mairie*, or in a prefecture where these works of art are more pretentious, not the official chamber, where the actual Chief of the Executive looks down from the walls on the acts of centralised administration performed within them, but the basement or the garret where the lumber of generations moulders in the dust. Here repose, undisturbed by revolutions, the portraits of all the past rulers of France since the century was young. The latest of them never was exposed to view. It only arrived the day M. Casimir-Périer startled the provinces with his resignation; the look of tenacity in his face belying the ease and swiftness with which his enemies made him climb down from power. The last picture that was hung presents the punctilious form of M. Carnot, attired in correct black broadcloth set off with the ribbon of the national order. His methodical dress was the unfailing subject for the mirth of wits, till the night the crimson of the Legion of Honour hid the stream of life-blood, when the President was murdered in his wonted costume in which

too he was laid to rest in the Pantheon. The wily features of M. Grévy suggest the frugal virtues of the peasantry rather than integrity in high places, exemplified by Carnot, or the warlike gallantry of MacMahon. The Marshal's uniform, here presented, calls forth memories not of the Seize Mai, but of the return of the troops from Italy, when from the field of Magenta he brought back an almost forgotten title; it revives the names of Sebastopol, and of Malakoff, which, blazoned above the altar in the chapel of the Invalides the day of his burial, gave greater joy to the Crimean veterans than to the officers of Russia, whom France then was fêting in the vague hope of a renewal of her glories.

The next in the ghost-like series is M. Thiers, battered and faded; but the shrill visage, beneath the pugnacious crest, can never be mistaken, whether found in old prints, adorning early issues of his youthful *History of the Revolution*, or reproduced by Bonnat's genius half a century later, or here under the dust of twenty years. It is well preserved compared with the mildewed effigy which is behind. This is evidently copied from Hippolyte Flandrin's *Napoléon III.*, for dim in the background there is the outline of the bust of the great Emperor; and comparing the features or looking at the nebulous eyes of this dreamer in epaulettes who quitted France at Sedan, one wonders if the songstress of the brave Dunois believed her son to be by blood a Bonaparte. Louis Philippe, blackened and crumbling, can just be recognised by the pear-shaped head of Gavarni's sketches. The Revolution of July, which caused the diligence to bring his portrait to this country town, is more than two generations away; and the rats have left nothing but a phantom in the frame of his Most Christian cousin, whose portraits were better taken care of in the far-off days, when his kingly prospects were remote,—when Drouais painted the little Comte d'Artois, while Louis XV. was installing Madame du Barry at Versailles, and Marie Antoinette was learning French at Vienna. Yet this musty relic of Charles X. is interesting. It was the official presentment of the only ruler of France, hereditary or republican, constitutional or plebiscitary, who, during a hundred and twenty years, succeeded

to the supreme Executive by the natural death or normal lapse of powers of his predecessor.¹ No doubt there is little resemblance between the flight of Louis Philippe to Newhaven and the retirement of M. Grévy to the Avenue d'Iéna, but both those proceedings were abdications. It is certainly the strongest argument in favour of the Republican form of government, that the abdication of the Chief of the Executive is effected under a Republic without revolution, its invariable accompaniment when a monarch is impelled to lay down his functions.

Two reflections an Englishman may make while disturbing the dust of this disowned gallery of once acclaimed French rulers. The one is that the sovereign whose subject he is at the century's close has witnessed the investiture and the destitution of all these monarchs and presidents within her lifetime; and even when her reign began, the first of the series, who had led the revels at Trianon for years before the Bastille fell, had only just ended his short exile at Goritz.² The other reflection is that while his own country has been spared convulsion during a century of revolution, and while one placid and prosperous reign has covered more than half of the span which lies between the Old Regime and the end of the nineteenth century, the variously denominated Chiefs of the Executive in France, from Louis XVI. to M. Félix Faure, have been distinguished for excellent qualities. If examined individually, they will compare favourably with any series of rulers during a like space of a hundred and twenty years in any government of ancient or modern times. There has never been another instance of empire, kingdom, or republic suffering so sorely for more than a century from internal vicissitudes where some of the rulers might not be classed by historians of forcible style as monsters or idiots. As none of the rulers of France during that period can impartially be thus designated, in spite of Victor Hugo's florid arraignments of Louis Napoleon, and the scorn of the old Orleanists for the mental faculties of

¹ A hundred and twenty-five years after the accession of Louis XVI. the sudden death of M. Faure put M. Loubet in the same category with Charles X.

² Charles X., who was born in 1757, died on October 6, 1836, about eight months before Queen Victoria acceded. He abdicated in July 1830.

Charles X., this seems to indicate that in the new era nations have to work out their own destiny. The gigantic figure of Napoleon stands apart, as a phenomenon which rises twice perhaps in a thousand years of the world's history. It may be it was the strength of his grip that made France unfit for the possession of men of ordinary stature and of limited powers; and though he was necessary for the reconstruction of the society swept down with the old royalty, it was equally needful that he should have left a successor, the heir of his methods and his prowess. However that may be, the spectacle which France has repeatedly presented of misgovernment, of anarchy, or of revolution cannot be ascribed to the character of her rulers. M. Grévy narrowly escaped ending his term of office as boisterously as Charles X. ended his reign. Yet there was nothing in common, either in personal temperament or in public policy, between the brother-in-law of Marie Antoinette and the father-in-law of M. Wilson. Nevertheless, but for the unreadiness of General Boulanger, and the fortuitous calling of M. Carnot, an insurrection would have accompanied the presidential crisis of 1887 as though it had been the downfall of a monarchy.

It is clear, therefore, that whatever the character of the Chief of the Executive, and whatever regime he represents, he is certain to incur, sooner or later, the discontent of a sufficient number of the French people to make his position untenable. Moreover, no two revolutionary movements in modern France can be ascribed to the same cause, whether they take the form of dethroning a dynasty or of upsetting a president. It was as the protector of clericalism and of the censorship of the press that Charles X. lost the crown. It was the agitation for electoral reform which overturned Louis Philippe. Louis Napoleon might have suppressed every popular liberty with impunity had he only returned from the frontier victorious, and it was the fortune of war which destroyed the Second Empire. Under the Republic the crises which have stopped short of revolution, thus displaying the chief benefit of that regime, have been all due to diverse causes. The force which impelled Marshal MacMahon

to resign was the growing contempt in the country for the ineptitude of the reactionary party and the rising cult for the genius of Gambetta. M. Grévy nearly had the honour of a revolution to escort him into private life, because his dingy failings were out of keeping with a periodic impulse of the nation towards the glitter of dictatorship. The attacks before which M. Casimir-Périer capitulated were based on the social question.

Is it therefore to be inferred that the French are as a nation prone to revolution and ungovernable? If each successive revolutionary movement had had the same direction, if it had been a violent manifestation of an identical doctrine, then it would be just to assume that the great upheaval of 1789 was still fermenting, and that revolutions would recur so long as any article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man was infringed. But the periodical disturbances which convulse France have nothing to do with the doctrine of 1789. No doubt the habit of insurrection was then acquired; and as the Revolution of 1830 was nominally directed against the heirs of the old Monarchy, the first of the series in this century took its place as the putative offspring of the great Revolution. But subsequently the Days of June which were the cause of Louis Napoleon obtaining the supreme power, the uprising which proclaimed his fall, and the rebellion of the Commune had no more connection with the doctrine of 1789 than the Boulangist movement or the demonstrations of the new Socialists, which have more recently put ideas of revolution into men's minds.

When it is further considered that the vast majority of the French people is peaceable and industrious, it becomes clear that revolution is chiefly to be feared from the fitful discontent of the turbulent of Paris and of certain industrial centres. The best form of government, therefore, for France is the one which can best keep in hand that section of the population. Here, no doubt, the advantage of the Republican form becomes most apparent; not because it is the creation of 1792, but for the anatomical reason that its head is a removable accessory and not

a vital organ. Hence the Republic, with its succession of Presidents, whom it can shed in turn without hurt to itself, would be the ideal regime for France if her children could divest themselves of their ever-smouldering desire for a hero to worship and a master to submit to.

This latent instinct is the weakness of the Republican system ; for it will not only kill it one day, but, meanwhile, it so alarms its defenders that they use all the force of governmental machinery to crush men of parts who seem apt to win popular favour. It was thus that Gambetta found the way to the Presidency barred for him. Yet by cutting short his career his enemies nearly secured for France a worse fate than his dictatorship ; for the people's desire to be governed was not buried with him, and but for his death General Boulanger would never have inspired a legend. It has become a commonplace to applaud the patriotism of the politicians who, aided by circumstances, ridded France of that soldier of fortune ; yet no one knows for certain that the country would have been worse off had he been called to power, and the government of the Republic since his day has not been so perfect as to make it impossible to conceive a better. Because he was a pitiful adventurer it does not of necessity follow that he would have been a bad administrator. We all have heard of the veteran miserably slain six months after attaining the supreme power, who would have been deemed to be "*capax imperii nisi imperasset*" ;¹ and there may be men who have just failed to reach success of whom an epigram in the converse sense might be made. The narrow escape which the country then had makes the guardians of the Constitution take excessive precautions in overshadowing honourable achievements likely to win popularity ; and the spectacle has been witnessed in Republican France of a general, returning home victorious after a colonial war, treated as though he were afflicted with an infectious disease certain to disseminate contagion, and therefore to be kept from the sight and touch of his fellow-countrymen.²

¹ Tacitus · *Hist.* i. 49.

² General Dodds on his return after the Dahomey expedition of 1892.

If the Third Republic is fearful of paying excessive honour to its sons during their lifetime lest it should thus endow them with sufficient strength and prestige to overturn it, it has an original method of proving to the world that it is not barren in great men. It does not stint its funereal tribute to those who, having died in its service, can never become popular idols dangerous to the established regime. A stranger arriving in Paris and finding its monuments swathed in black, its boulevards lined with thousands of troops to salute in its passage a pompous bier borne along to the martial music of an heroic march, asks why these trappings of woe, why this imposing pageant, deployed with all the art of which the French are masters, suggestive of a nation mourning its noblest son? Obsequies stately as these could only be offered to one who, in the hour of vicissitude, had done the country services like those of Thiers and Gambetta, or to an immortal genius like Victor Hugo. It cannot be that another President of the Republic has met with untimely death ; and the last Marshal of France has still a short span to complete before he is borne to the Invalides with the supreme homage due to the distant memory of a once victorious army.

The name that the stranger hears on the lips of the crowd, which has the air of curiosity rather than of lamentation, conveys little to his mind, even though he be a student of European politics. If he pursue his inquiries he ascertains that this funereal parade, the like of which is seen in England only once or twice in a century, when a Nelson or a Wellington is laid to rest, is in honour of a politician who has held office for two brief spaces in two ephemeral Ministries, and who ended his career by presiding over the Chamber of Deputies for a few weeks : the total period of his office-holding having amounted to about one year. But even on the morrow when Parliament, despite a frugal protest, votes to the bereaved family a pension double that accorded to the widow of a Marshal of France, the country rests unconvinced of the greatness of the dead man thus glorified, only perceiving in its scepticism that under the Republic the most profitable of all pursuits is that of politics.

In spite of the efforts, both of the jealous and of the disinterested, the day will come when no power will prevent France from hailing a hero of her choice. Whether he will bear the name of a once reigning dynasty, or whether he will be a statesman to inspire victory, or a soldier to achieve it, the next generation will know. Judging from history, we may doubt if France will be appreciably happier or unhappier under the new regime than under past dispensations, and its duration could not be predicted even if its founder were revealed. It is possible that the present system under which France is governed is as effective as any other for producing the greatest happiness of the greatest number ; but no country can remain in the first rank of European nations, in the sense in which French temperament regards the first rank, without conspicuous leaders of men. In Switzerland individual well-being attains a high standard, and there the system of the impersonality of the government is so well carried out that the Presidents who succeed one another every year are individually as little known to fame in their country as are the Lord Mayors of London in our own. It is probable that not one in a million of the strangers who visit the Helvetic Republic ever knows by name the President of the Confederation for the time being. But this sinking of personality will never suit the genius of the French nation. It was essayed in the Revolution, and the result was the greatest and most masterful personality that ever despotised—Napoleon.

That France should become a swollen Switzerland is not a prospect to appeal to patriotic sentiment ; but there are worse fates awaiting democracies than the inglorious prosperity of the federated cantons. The United States are as prosperous as Switzerland, and have with affluence become almost as barren in art and in letters, after an early season of wondrous literary promise. It is true that in that vast Republic the name of the President is familiar to every citizen ; but his renown, while it affords no danger of dictatorship, does not make his office an object of ambition for the worthiest members of the community. The abstention from politics of the better types of Frenchmen,

combined with the growing materialism of the upper classes of the capital, are symptoms which cannot be regarded with indifference, when the example of America, of too great influence in France, is contemplated. The dangers and difficulties which now beset peoples are of a different order from those which were apparent a hundred years ago when the calendar was dated from the new era of the change of things ; but signs are not wanting that the French nation may need as strong a hand to guide it out of the nineteenth century as that of the First Consul which brought it thither.

BOOK III

THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

CHAPTER I

THE UPPER CHAMBER

I

WE have seen that since 1792, while the Chief of the Executive has from time to time been called King or Emperor, there has been no royalty in France,—if we understand by that word a perpetual corporation represented by an individual who has received from his predecessors immemorial attributes, in turn to be handed on to a successor. In the same way there have been assemblies of delegates known by the name of Senators, Peers, or Deputies, which have met and performed functions prescribed by constitutional statute. But the expression Senate, or Chamber of Peers, or Chamber of Deputies, has never had a signification analogous to that of House of Lords or House of Commons in our country, indicating permanent corporations which have inherited and will bequeath certain powers and traditions.

The French legislative bodies since the Revolution no doubt have reflected the national will, but it has been the will of an hour; to-day enthusiastic and aggressive; to-morrow passive to the abandonment of everything. It might be interesting to examine the powers and composition of all the houses of legislature set up in France, under more than a dozen constitutions, from the day that the Third Estate in the Tennis Court at Versailles consecrated the Constituent Assembly down to the foundation of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies under the Third Republic in 1875. But the result of such an examina-

tion would be rather the history of the varying moods of the French people during three generations, than a serious study in government.

It can be of no practical utility, for example, to compare, with earlier or later systems, either the Parliament of Louis Philippe, its nominated Chamber of Peers and its Lower House elected on a limited franchise, or the Legislature of the Second Empire and its Chamber, the product of universal suffrage in leading strings. This was the experience of the National Assembly in 1875. They found that the only lesson to be learned from the constitutions which France had enjoyed since the Revolution was that, whatever the electoral franchise, whether there were one Chamber or two, and whatever the relations of the Legislature with the Executive, the end was always the same—insurrection or *coup d'état*. It behoved the Assembly, therefore, to conceive some combination which had not been essayed by previous constituent legislators. By chance they lighted on a system not hitherto tried, and as it has survived for over a score of years, its most long-lived predecessors having expired at the age of seventeen, it may be regarded as a not unsuccessful creation.

The first question that the National Assembly had to decide in constructing a new legislature was whether it should have one Chamber or two. Here past history gave no aid, though the problem has agitated reformers since the dawn of representative institutions in France. Lally-Tollendal, in the name of the commission delegated by the first representatives of the nation to draw up a scheme of constitution, said, a month after the Fall of the Bastille, "With one Chamber you can destroy everything; without two Chambers you can found nothing."¹ Danton, on the other hand, two years later, at the Jacobin Club, denounced the system of two Chambers as "the invention of the priest Siéyès to destroy the constitution and liberty."² That the men of '89 were in favour of two Chambers, and that their violent

¹ Rapport du Comité de Constitution, 19 Août 1789

² June 21, 1791

successors favoured a single one, is a reason why the doctrinaires of this century should prefer the double system. It is to be observed that the Constitution of 1875 was the work of the exponents of the doctrine of 1789. The debates in the National Assembly were of high excellence, and were to a great extent conducted by elderly men of that school whom only one generation divided from the Revolution. The Legitimists had obviously little to say. The Imperialists refrained from taking part in a discussion foreign to their ideas of government. The new Republicans abstained also. They were then identified with the rising genius of Gambetta, who said practically to the Assembly, "In principle I am in favour of one legislative chamber;¹ but if you prefer the other system, let us have it, as it is a point of detail of small importance, now that you have shown that the only use you can make of an overwhelming monarchical majority is to establish the Republic." This somewhat disdainful attitude of the popular leader, daily reassured that the country was with him, was justified. Reactionaries declared openly that a Second Chamber was needful, as a barrier to prevent the revolutionary party from coming into power by legal means,—signifying by the revolutionary party Gambetta and his followers, who, in four years, were masters of the Senate as well as of the Lower House.

The attributes of the new Senate were thus discussed in the Assembly almost solely by members of the Left Centre, where the boundary-line was faint between Orleanism of the old school and doctrinaire Republicanism. The speeches are interesting as the utterances of men who had grown up with survivors of 1789, who had listened to controversies under the Restoration, when constitutional studies were the order of the day, and who had looked upon the Revolution of July as the reconsecration of the new era. It is not surprising that a debate conducted by men who, born under the Revolutionary Calendar, had seen the rise

¹ In a speech at Tours six years later (August 6th, 1881), Gambetta described himself as "*partisan convaincu des deux chambres*," but this was only a rhetorical exordium to a severe attack on the Senate, which had recently rejected his "*scrutin de liste*," and to an argument in favour of its reform.

and fall of all the regimes of the century, should be pervaded by an air of scepticism. The general argument seemed to be that while in France it mattered little in practice whether there were one or two legislative Chambers, it was the tradition of the doctrinaires to admire the English Constitution, which has two Chambers. Moreover, the great offspring of the English system, and the most powerful republic of modern times, the United States, set great store by its Senate. Therefore France ought to have a Second Chamber, though the past had not proved its utility, and though it was difficult to construct one on a new and a not discredited plan.

It was pointed out that twice only since the Revolution had a constituent assembly dispensed with a Second Chamber: once under a king in 1791, when the controversy ended on the scaffold; and again under a Republic in 1848, when the result was the Coup d'État of December 1851. Both those constitutions, however, contained in themselves, it was argued, the germ of destruction, in having an executive power independent of the legislature; in the former case a constitutional monarch (for so Louis XVI. had become), whose head a Second Chamber might have saved, but not his crown; and under the Second Republic a President elected directly by universal suffrage.

On the other hand there was the historical fact that the system of two Chambers had not postponed for a day other revolutions. The most important *coup d'état* the world ever saw, that of the 18 Brumaire, was effected against a legislature divided into two assemblies, one of which indeed aided Bonaparte in executing his violence on the other. An incident was narrated of the Revolution of 1848. The stormy incidents at the Chamber of Deputies the day of the downfall of the Orleans dynasty are famous, when an heroic young mother vainly appealed to the people to accept a regency in favour of the child clinging to her skirts, destined to live and to die an exile. The Chamber of Peers was sitting expectant in its solitary palace. An unconcerned member, the Marquis de St. Priest, sauntering in, was accosted

by M. Molé, who asked him in agitated tones if he knew what was happening—the Lower House invaded by the insurgents and the deputies expelled. “I believe they are on the way to turn us out,” added the affrighted ex-minister. “Do not flatter yourself, M. le Comte,” replied M. de St. Priest, “they will never come here”; and it was so: the peace of the Luxembourg was not disturbed.

After the principle of a Second Chamber had been accepted by the Assembly, the ingenuity of its members was sorely tried to devise a Senate which should differ in some respect from the Chamber of Deputies. We have seen, in examining the powers of the President, that the Assembly voted that the Senate should be elected, like the Chamber of Deputies, by universal suffrage,¹ Orleanists and Bonapartists aiding the Republicans to carry this provision. When Marshal MacMahon disallowed this vote, the most advanced Republicans made no protest. It was felt that as the creation of a Second Chamber was inevitable, it was reasonable that it should be constructed on lines somewhat different from those of the Lower House. It was candidly owned in debate that this was only a concession to form. It was argued that if 300 members were transferred by lot from the National Assembly into another hall of the Palace of Versailles, and there told that they composed a Senate endowed with certain powers of control over their late colleagues, within a month they would develop an entirely different spirit.² This satirical suggestion contains the true argument in favour of Second Chambers. In modern communities, even in those which have retained in the body politic an aristocratic element, class distinction no longer exists in the sense of a dividing line between social categories which have no sentiments in common. It is therefore impossible to devise any system of two Chambers, whereby the Upper House, whatever its basis, shall consist of persons who look at every question from a different point of view from that of the popular representatives in the Lower Chamber.

¹ Ass. Nat. Séance du 11 Février 1875.

² M. Laboulaye: A. N. Séance du 12 Février 1875.

In England, for example, a peer (unless afflicted with the mania of grandeur) does not regard from a standpoint different from that of his lawyer or of his tailor, from that of a professor or of a stockbroker, questions relating to the powers of the Crown, to the fiscal system, or to public education. He has his individual views on these subjects; but they are not class views, excepting in the sense of being those of the so-called "comfortable" class from which the Lower House is recruited almost as exclusively as the Upper. His opinions on public questions are not steeped in the prejudices of a limited order, as were those of the French nobles of the Old Regime, who held themselves to be of a different race from the Third Estate, but who, it should not be forgotten, were not entrusted with political power. It is probable that in England, if the places of the present members of the House of Lords were taken by five hundred other rate-payers chosen from the Stock-Exchange, from Lincoln's Inn, from Bond Street, and from Oxford, and invested with the same powers as the hereditary peers, the course of legislation would undergo no change. In the great modern communities of the world, the most interesting in their development, in England and in France, in the United States and in the British Colonies, whether the constitution be new or old, monarchical or republican, there are only two social classes,—that which gains a livelihood by manual toil, and that which earns a living in other ways, or subsists on the interest of capital. The only possible conception therefore of two Chambers regarding legislative questions *ab initio* from different points of view is that of an Upper House representing the bourgeois element (in the sense of the word as used by the French Socialists), and of a Lower Chamber delegated entirely by wage-earners. Such a system could never be started on honest lines, and, if started, it could never be worked. Hence the makers of new constitutions are, in the formation of Second Chambers, faced by invincible difficulties. It passes the wit of man to construct a Second Chamber which shall be effective in checking the popular assembly, and have some logical basis for its foundation. Therefore a community

possessing by inheritance such an institution would be rash to try to transform it on the ground that it is approved less by the rational faculty than by the traditional instinct of the nation.

The doctrinaires who had been brought up on the principles of 1789, tempered by admiration for the British Constitution, did not hesitate to say in the National Assembly that only two bases were possible for a legislature—election and heredity. As even the Legitimists did not hint that the latter could possibly be established in France, it behoved the old Republicans to combat the system of a nominated Senate. The scorn with which the mob of 1848 treated the Chamber of Peers showed that such a body would only irritate the democracy if it escaped its contempt, without being a defence of the Constitution. When the Assembly, essaying to conciliate conflicting views, proposed that one-third of the Second Chamber should be appointed by the President, Marshal MacMahon refused to have anything to do with the naming of the new senators. Bound to nominate Reactionaries, he knew that they who had achieved nothing with the complete control in their hands of an absolute single Chamber, would not become less inept because an Upper House was packed with them. He foresaw that the President, if he accepted the right of nomination, would be identified with the performances of his nominees. Consequently the nomination of the irremovable senators (reduced to one-fourth of the whole number) devolved at first on the National Assembly, and, from its dissolution until 1884, when the elective system was extended to the entire body, the Senate itself filled vacancies which occurred among its nominated members.

The example of England not being imitable, the American model of a Second Chamber was cited with a curious misapprehension of its structure. M. Waddington, who was not a doctrinaire of the Revolution, but an Englishman by origin and by education, proposed that the Senate should be elected by the *conseils-généraux* and the *conseils d'arrondissement* of the departments, on the analogy of the election of the

American Senate by the State Legislatures of the Union.¹ It is surprising that a statesman of unusually wide knowledge, who, moreover, had close relations with America, should have suggested an analogy between the local governing bodies of the centralised French departments and the legislatures of the sovereign states of the Federal Union. His scheme was rejected on the ground that, members of the conseils d'arrondissement being more numerous in each department than those of the more important conseils-généraux, the Senate would under it be nominated by the district² councillors, who for the most part are insignificant persons, elected to perform insignificant functions. The principle of indirect election was, however, accepted, and the electoral colleges were constituted on the lines on which, with certain modifications, they still subsist, the senatorial electors of each department being the deputies, the members of the conseil-général and of the conseils d'arrondissement, and a delegation chosen by each municipal council.³

II

Before considering the working of the Senate as constituted by the law of 1875 with the amendments of 1884, it will be useful to glance at some of the alternative schemes proposed to the National Assembly. Owing to reasons historical and racial, there are not many points in the French Constitution which can be utilised by Englishmen as examples or as warnings. But the creation of a Second Chamber by a constituent assembly, containing the best intelligence of the conservative and

¹ "M. Waddington a proposé de donner l'élection des sénateurs aux conseillers généraux et aux conseillers d'arrondissement. Il a voulu se rapprocher ainsi du système d'élection du Sénat Fédéral des États-Unis élu par les membres des deux chambres de chaque Etat."—Rapport fait à l'Assemblée Nationale au nom de la Commission des Lois constitutionnelles, 22 Février 1875.

² The expression "district councillor" is an accurate equivalent of "conseiller d'arrondissement," and is not a mere adaptation of a modern English term. The arrondissements under the law which first created the department and subdivided it (loi du 22 Décembre 1789) were called "districts." The original "districts" were, however, somewhat smaller than the actual arrondissements.

³ Loi organique du 24 Février 1875.

democratic elements of a great nation, was fruitful in suggestion. Therefore, as the reform of the Upper House of the English Parliament is to amateurs a constant pretext for devising plans of Second Chambers, it may be of interest to see that nearly every idea that has inspired the fancy of our own empirics was in some form passed in review by the National Assembly at Versailles.

A Second Chamber must necessarily be hereditary, nominated, or elected, or else composed of elements combined from categories thus formed. As for the hereditary system, it is clearly impracticable to plant it in a new constitution in a democratic State. The system of nomination, when not exercised by the Chief of the State, is not easy to distinguish from certain forms of indirect election. For example, the senators nominated by the French Senate from 1876 to 1884 were certainly chosen by indirect popular election. Nomination by an elective Chief of the Executive whose term of office is limited may also be considered as a species of indirect election. The members of an electoral college appointed to choose a President of a Republic invested with the power of nominating legislators would, in casting their votes, undoubtedly give weight to the fact that they were choosing not only a Chief of the Executive, but a Grand Elector, delegated by them to name legislative representatives. Indeed, excepting in an autocracy, like the Second Empire, the absolute power of nomination scarcely exists. But without straining so far the signification of terms, it will be convenient to define nomination as appointment by the Chief of the State on the advice of Ministers.

The possible forms of election of a Second Chamber are manifold. It may be direct or indirect. It may be based on the same suffrage as that ordained for the Lower Chamber, or on a more limited franchise. Or the qualifications and disqualifications may be applied not to the electors, but to the elected. In that case the electorate is restricted to choose its representatives from definite categories of citizens—from those, for instance, who have passed a certain limit of age, or who

pay a certain amount of tax, or who belong to certain constituted bodies. Moreover there are forms of election which can only be applied to peculiar constitutions. For example, the American Senate is based on the Federal Constitution of the United States. We have seen how vain was the talk of modelling the French Senate after the American pattern on the pretence that the administrative divisions, called departments, with their centrally-controlled local-governing bodies, had any analogy with federated states and their sovereign legislatures. In the same way it would be necessary to federate the British Isles or the British Empire before the pattern of the United States could be of service to improvers of the British Constitution.

All the other systems were passed in review by the French constituent legislators of 1875. The idea of choosing the Senate by direct election based on a restricted franchise only aroused memories of the unpopular Lower Chamber of the Monarchy of July, elected on this principle. In England, certain reformers of the House of Lords might like to see in the place of that assembly a body resembling the House of Commons of Lord Palmerston's time. Its legislative accomplishments would probably not differ from those of the present Upper House. By adding to the chaos of British electoral franchises, and by further complicating the registration laws, its establishment would do little more than increase the painstaking class which subsists on the revision of voters—a result which perhaps might not compensate for the destruction of the British Constitution. Increased employment to officials and politicians would similarly arise from the adoption of the plan, discussed by the National Assembly, of having senatorial electors chosen periodically by the electors entitled to vote for members of the Lower House. It was proposed that one delegate should be chosen by each hundred primary electors.¹ The proposition was rejected on the ground that as the senatorial electors would

¹ Proposition Vautrain. In large communes containing over 800 electors it was proposed that the voters should be divided into sections of from 400 to 800, so that no "primary elector" should have a voice in the choice of more than eight "electors of the second degree."

have no other function than that of meeting at long intervals to choose the senators of the department, the anxiety of ordinary citizens to occupy the post would be so faint that the electoral colleges would be filled entirely with professional politicians.

Other projects laid before the National Assembly bear resemblance to some of those put forward by reformers of the House of Lords in a "conservative" sense. Amateur constitution-makers, both in countries where national vicissitude requires the creation of new legislatures and in those where the age of institutions tempts the temerity of reformers, find attractive the theory of forming a Second Chamber out of the notables of the nation. They urge that for the purpose of checking the proceedings of a popular house of representatives no assembly could be better fitted than one composed of citizens or subjects who have arrived at the highest eminence in their respective professions. They have no precedents to encourage them. Fanciful analogies from antiquity sometimes occur to them; but the history of parliamentary institutions affords them no aid. It is quite possible that the lists they draw up contain the materials of chambers as effective as any Senate or House of Peers of modern times. They nevertheless suggest, rather than the idea of a legislature, a catalogue of the distinguished company at a public funeral in France, or in England (where interments are a less favourite national pastime¹), at the laying of a foundation-stone by a royal personage.

Two alternative methods are proposed for the calling into being of such an Assembly: either the right to sit in it must be conferred *ex officio* on the holders of certain defined situations, or it must be chosen by popular suffrage from restricted categories of citizens. The most familiar suggestion, according to the first method, is that made by English reformers who

¹ In France funerals of celebrities are looked upon almost as gala ceremonies. For example, it was officially announced that M. Brisson, President of the Chamber of Deputies, was unable to attend the obsequies of his predecessor, M. Floquet, owing to his being in mourning for a relative who had died several weeks previously (January 1896).

desire to see religious bodies other than the Anglican Church officially represented in the House of Peers. They only perceive the anomaly of special representation in the Upper Chamber of the clergy of one religious body which is not even established in two portions of the kingdom. They ignore or misapprehend the historical reason for the presence of the bishops in the legislature, which dates from a period when one religion was professed by the entire people, and the sacerdotal caste was an estate of the realm.¹ To carry out their suggestion consistently, either the Lords Spiritual must be abolished, which would be the destruction of the Constitution, and therefore a revolutionary measure; or the other representatives of religious bodies, although appointed also in their capacity of agents of the unseen, must be invidiously labelled as Temporal Peers.

When we descend from the general principle to examine particular suggestions, the example of France is of some service in indicating difficulties. A favourite proposal is that the President of the Wesleyan Conference and the corresponding officers of other important sects should have seats in the House of Lords. No doubt the stirring eloquence of those divines would enliven its debates; but how are we to get them there? In France, if the National Assembly had voted an extension of the principle adopted by the Second Empire, whereby the Cardinals sat in the Senate, there would have been no difficulty whatever in giving official representation to all the religious communities of the land, because each of them, Catholic, Protestant, and Hebrew, including practically the entire French nation, is a "constituted body." In the United Kingdom, outside the Anglican Church, the only religious organisation which is a constituted body in the French sense of that phrase, is the Church of Scotland. For the purpose of giving them

¹ I suppose that there is little doubt that the inferior clergy of the Church of England, save those who are hereditary peers, as well as those members of the Episcopate who are not Lords of Parliament, are now members of the Third Estate, as, in spite of the disability of clerks to sit in the House of Commons, they have the right to vote at elections of representatives of the Third Estate.

power to send delegates to a legislature we possess no means of recognising either the great dissenting sects or even the original mother church of the three kingdoms, the Roman communion, except by some impracticable scheme of concurrent establishment. The constitutional Act creating the new Upper House might arbitrarily provide that the half dozen denominations owning the largest number of buildings registered for worship should send to it representatives ; or, as that would provoke the erection of "faggot" conventicles, it might institute a competitive religious census. It is clear that only the most numerous bodies could be represented ; as if each of the 250 sects certified to the Registrar-General were to nominate a peer there would not be much room in the gilded chamber for the field-m Marshals and county-councillors, with whom the reformers intend to complete the assembly. But that necessary restriction would be likely to provoke more emulation and strife than the ancient anomalies which have come down from the Plantagenets. The dwindling Quakers, with their wealth and historical tradition, would deem themselves as worthy of representation as the multiplying Methodists : the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion would regard its noble origin as a more appropriate claim than the legions of the Salvation Army.

In France, where the sectarian spirit when it exists does not take the form of diversified creed, all the religious persuasions except the infinitesimal, are recognised by the State as constituted bodies. In England, the Seventh Day Adventists or the Irvingites are in the same legal position as the great communities which in numbers rival the Established Church. In France, Père Hyacinthe's congregation or the survivors of the anti-concordatary Catholics of the Deux Sèvres are not in the same position as the state-paid Confession of Augsbourg and the Reformed Church, although those established Protestant denominations are relatively of less importance by the side of the Catholic Church than are the Wesleyans with regard to the Church of England. Consequently it would not be impracticable in France to make a seat in the Senate the complement of high

office in all religious bodies of importance. This was a feature in the first scheme recommended by the Commission of the National Assembly,¹ which was subsequently renounced as too artificial and complicated.

The Assembly also took into consideration an analogous scheme proposed by M. Bardoux, a moderate Republican, to the effect that the Senate should be elected by universal suffrage, the choice of the electors being confined to persons who had attained the age of forty, and who belonged to one of sixteen categories.² It may be useful to glance at those conditions of eligibility to see if they could be used for a reformed Upper Chamber in England. Three of the categories were ecclesiastical—the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the high officials of the Protestant and Jewish communities. The others included the members of the Lower Chamber; members of former legislative and constituent assemblies (the latter qualification serving to remind that this was the fourteenth Constitution constructed in France in the lifetime of men then surviving); members of the conseils-généraux; persons who had held the office of cabinet minister or ambassador; certain judges of the high courts; members of the Institute; marshals, admirals, and generals; the governors of the colonies; the mayors of towns having 30,000 inhabitants; certain officials of the University and of the Bank of France, and the presidents of the Chambers of Commerce.

¹ The elaborate scheme of the Commission des Trente is worth studying by admirers of paper constitutions. Half of the senators were to be appointed by the Chief of the Executive, the other 150 to be chosen by specially constituted electoral colleges. From the 150 senators named by decree of the President were to be deducted a small number of *ex officio* senators (sénateurs de droit)—the Cardinals, Marshals, and Admirals, one or two of the highest judges, and five members of the Institute selected by that body. The remainder of the nominated half of the Senate was to be chosen by the President from the Catholic hierarchy, the high officials of the Augsburg Confession, the Reformed Church, and the Jewish community, from the ambassadors, generals, governors of colonies, judges of the High Court, members of the National Assembly, members of the Institute, etc. The electoral colleges for the elective senators were to be composed of voters qualified by franchises of a dozen descriptions, all more or less complex (*Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale*, T. 34 Annexes).

² Ass. Nat. Séance du 12 Février 1875. This scheme was a revival of one proposed by M. Dufaure when Vice-President of the Council in May 1873 under M. Thiers just before the resignation of the latter.

Now half these "eligibilities," which are ready to hand in France, have no official existence in England. The Catholic Archbishop of Paris and the Protestant President of the Consistory are functionaries dependent on the Ministry of Public Worship, the former being practically chosen by the Government. In England the office of a Roman Catholic bishop is not recognised by the State, and he holds his appointment from a foreign potentate;¹ while the status of the president of the Wesleyan Conference would be as difficult to put into an Act of Parliament as that of the president of the Marylebone Cricket Club. The presidents of the French Chambers of Commerce are likewise persons of legally defined powers subject to a department of the State; while the president of an English Chamber of Commerce, however important, is in the eye of the law simply the chairman of a private enterprise, like a choral association or an angling society. The Institute of France, with its limited Academies, has no counterpart in the learned and artistic corporations of our country; and the officials of the University all hold their posts under the Ministry of Education. These categories, from which senators might conveniently be chosen, no doubt comprehended most of the capacities in France, brilliant or business-like. They moreover were ready-made portions of the governmental machine, and every person included in them had his appointed place defined by code or by statute. They also represented the classes aptest to control democratic excess. Yet the constituent Assembly, with a Conservative majority, which regarded the creation of a Senate as a check to democracy, treated this and similar schemes as the House of Commons treated Mr. Disraeli's fancy franchises in 1867. If then the most experienced opinion considered artificial such qualifications

¹ The mode of appointment of French bishops under the Concordat will be dealt with in my next volume. In England, when on the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, in 1884, Cardinal Manning was given precedence immediately after the Prince of Wales and before several peers of various rank, the Home Office, while according him this high place, the result of a private arrangement, refused to recognise his title of archbishop. Consequently, in the Commission under the Queen's sign-manual, he was called Cardinal and Doctor in Divinity without any reference whatever to his episcopate.

for senatorship in a country where they formed part of the national economy, and where a Second Chamber had to be invented, some idea may be formed of the primary difficulties likely to attend any attempt to establish, in a land unused to new constitutions, an order of legislators whose qualifications would have for the most part to be manufactured.

It would repay few political students to read from beginning to end, as it has been my duty, the debates in the National Assembly of three sessions and the reports of its commissions on the organisation of the Senate, excepting for one purpose. The interminable series of discourses, many both eloquent and full of information, the profound and elaborate reports, the divisions of the Assembly, sometimes inconclusive and sometimes contradictory, all display the colossal difficulty of creating a new Second Chamber, even under the most favourable circumstances. They are a warning to all reformers, whether styled Radical or Conservative, who would mend and improve a venerable institution, or would sweep it away to erect in its place a modern edifice. Whether the abolition or the reform of the House of Lords would be the rasher proceeding this is not the place to discuss. It has been said that conscientious architects and restorers have worked more havoc among the ancient monuments of art in England than the incendiaries of the Revolution ever did in France; and a deep truth lies both in the statement and in its application.

III

After two years of hesitancy and negotiation the Constitutional Law organising the Senate was voted on February 24, 1875. Of the 300 senators 75 were to be nominated and irremovable, the National Assembly making the first selection before its own dissolution. The others (excepting seven assigned to Algeria and the colonies) were to be elected by the departments, the number of senators allotted to each being determined by population. The electoral college within each department was formed of the

deputies, the members of the conseils-généraux and of the conseils d'arrondissement, and the delegates of the municipal councils. The nominated element was afterwards abolished; but as the electoral colleges are still recruited from the same categories it may be well to consider for a moment if a system which, with some modification, has survived for over twenty years in France, could serve as a model for the constitution of a Second Chamber in England. If the county were taken as the electoral area corresponding to the department (the colonies being left out of the question, as no comparison can be instituted between the possessions abroad of England and of France), there would be no difficulty in providing the first three classes of electors. Members of Parliament, county councillors and district councillors sufficiently resemble deputies, conseillers-généraux, and conseillers d'arrondissement, to serve the purpose of supplying a small proportion of the senatorial electors. But when we get to the municipal councils then the radical difference between French and English organisation becomes apparent; for all our future reforms of local government will not in half a century map out the whole of the United Kingdom into communes with no conflict of jurisdiction or confusion of areas.

Five-sixths of the electors of the Senate were the nominees of the communes. Each of the 36,000 municipalities, large or small, chose one senatorial elector; while the deputies, conseillers-généraux, and conseillers d'arrondissement, all united, only numbered about 7000. Gambetta described the new Senate as "the grand council of the communes of France,"¹ and in 1884 the expression grew in force, when an end was put to the nomination of senators, while the number of municipal delegates was increased by a larger representation being accorded to the more populous communes. The phrase I shall have to criticise; but its use, accurate or rhetorical, displays the importance of the commune as an electoral basis. So as every foot of French soil, rural as well as urban, is subject to a municipal council, it would be useless to consider if a Second Chamber, constructed on the

¹ Discours de Belleville, 23 Août 1875.

lines of the French Senate, could ever be established in a country not administered on the communal system.

The Reactionaries failed to take advantage of the provision of the law creating the nominated element in the Senate, which was the chief work of their majority in the National Assembly. The Republicans accepted as inevitable the prospect of being for years in a minority after the nomination of a large body of Monarchists, who would be senators for life, though the opinion of the country receded from them. Even the sanguine Gambetta only ventured to predict that no Imperialists would be selected. To the stupefaction of all parties, such were the jealousies among the Reactionaries,—the Legitimists outvying the Bonapartists in their hatred of the Orleanists,—that, of the 75 irremovable senators appointed for life by the Assembly, in which the Republicans were in a minority, only 18 Monarchists of all shades were nominated.¹ The remaining 57 were Republicans. Their superior dexterity in the transaction would have been vain without the prodigious folly of the Reactionaries, who, it should be said, have, ever since the War, acted with perfect consistency when any call has been made on their intelligence, or even on their primitive instinct of self-preservation. Thus the reactionary institution of irremovable senators, by the maladroitness of the Reactionaries, saved the Republicans from being in a woful minority in the Upper Chamber; for at the first senatorial elections they were beaten in the country.² In the New Chamber,³ however, the Republicans were twice as numerous as the combined groups of all their opponents.

The Senate had the right of filling vacancies among its irremovable members. For the first which occurred,⁴ M. Buffet was chosen by a majority of two, the Monarchical leader having been rejected at the elections for both Houses. For using their slender majority to nominate one who had been defeated at the polls, the Reactionaries were adversely criticised by the Repub-

¹ December 1875. There were 15 Royalists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists, and 5 "Constitutionnels," all of whom could not be counted under the circumstances as Monarchists.

² January 1876.

³ February 1876.

⁴ June 1876.

licans; though the chief use of the co-optative power given to an elective assembly is to secure the presence of eminent men who could not enter it by other means. The closeness of this party vote showed that Republican senators were prepared to fight for the Republic. Nevertheless an incident soon occurred, which, looked at after the lapse of years, seems to support the theory that a Second Chamber, after a few months of existence, is fated to inspire all its members, no matter what their origin and prepossessions, with a peculiar spirit opposed to that of their colleagues of the lower branch of the legislature.

A controversy arose between the two Houses on the old question constantly at issue in systems of parliamentary government, as to the right of the Upper Chamber to interfere with the financial proposals of the popular assembly. It turned on the construction of a clause of the new Constitution which provided that all financial legislation should be in the first instance submitted to the Chamber of Deputies and voted by it.¹ The Senate, which the Constitution had not excluded from all share in financial legislation, had inserted in the Budget Bill an entirely new vote. The champions of the Chamber admitted that the Senate had the right to reduce a vote in the Budget or to reject it altogether; but they argued that the provision that financial legislation should originate in the Chamber disqualified the Upper House from taking the initiative in money matters. The Senate stood by its assumed rights, nearly five-sixths of its members opposing the pretension of the Chamber. It showed that ardent combatants for the Republican principle against that of the Monarchy were by the mere membership of a constituted body infected with a spirit of devotion to its privileges, overriding party feeling. Gambetta vigorously sustained the thesis that both the traditions of parliamentary government and reasons of public policy pointed to the sole competence in financial matters of the Chamber which directly represented the nation. The

¹ L.C. du 24 Fév. 1875, art. 8: "Les lois de finances doivent être en premier lieu présentées à la Chambre des Députés et votées par elle." The ambiguous wording of this clause has never been amended. (The letters L.C. in the notes signify Loi Constitutionnelle.)

speech was not one of his happiest: the great orator was not strongest in dialectical argument. His quotation of the precedents afforded by all the French Legislatures since the Revolution had the unconvincing air which appeal to precedent always has in France. Hence, while the usually practical leader of the people developed his juridical themes, it fell to the philosopher who was then Prime Minister, M. Jules Simon, to call attention to the practical consequences of a conflict between the two Chambers. The Republic was only precariously founded on the dissensions of its opponents. A parliamentary deadlock would have been described as anarchy by the Reactionaries; and Marshal MacMahon would have been justified and perhaps successful in making a *coup d'état*, which the union of the Republican party made abortive the following year after the Seize Mai. Consequently the Chamber almost unanimously decided to accept the amendments of the Senate.¹

During the rest of Marshal MacMahon's presidency, politicians had more serious issues to watch than those which might arise between the two Chambers. The small Reactionary majority in the Senate had no cohesion, and it had disappeared when the Republican regime commenced under M. Grévy in 1879. Henceforth, whenever the Senate came into conflict with the Chamber of Deputies it was at the instance of moderate Republicans, who, now that the Republic was secured, did not wish it to be handed over to the Extreme Left.²

In 1881 discord arose between the two Houses. The Chamber had voted Gambetta's favourite project of *scrutin de liste* as the basis for the election of deputies.³ For *scrutin d'arrondissement*, the system of one-member areas, it substituted, as the sole electoral division, the department, each one forming a single constituency, and each elector in it being entitled to vote for as many candidates as the department had deputies

¹ December 1876.

² *e.g.* the rejection by the Senate of the anti-clerical "article 7" of the "Lois sur l'enseignement supérieur" (March 1880), and the modification of terms of amnesty of Communards (June 1880).

³ May 19, 1881.

allotted to it, according to its population.¹ The Senate opposed the change on constitutional grounds. M. Waddington, in his report upon the bill, asserted that the constitution-makers of 1875 wished to put the members of the two Houses on a footing of equality by prescribing that the deputy should be elected by the universal suffrage of a fraction of the department; whereas the senator chosen by a less authoritative electorate should be the representative of the entire department. He urged that if the elect of universal suffrage became also the departmental delegates, the senators chosen by indirect election would lose prestige. This specious argument reflected the feeling of the Senate, and the essay of *scrutin de liste* was postponed until its chief apologist was dead. Republicans were divided on the question, and the intervention of the Upper Chamber was regarded not as a Reactionary victory but as the triumph of M. Grévy over M. Gambetta.

Thus, at the elections of 1881, less prominent in the thoughts of Republican politicians than the powers of the Senate was the destiny of Gambetta. Those elections, however, almost swept the Reactionaries out of the Chamber, and returned a great majority pledged to reform the Upper House. The subsequent defeat of the Ferry Cabinet; the premiership forced inopportunely on Gambetta; his desertion by the ablest of the Republicans in his construction of the so-called "Grand Ministère"; the fall of his administration nine weeks later,²—these events are familiar to all students of contemporary history. None have more effectively justified those critics of democratic government who assert that the bane of the Republican system is envy, which condemns excellence to obscurity and exposes capability to ostracism. It is certain that the Republicans of the Chamber who drove Gambetta out of office on technical details of constitutional revision, thought less of curbing the pretensions of the too powerful Senate than of checking the ambitions of the too popular leader, to whom many of them owed their political existence.

¹ One deputy was allotted for every 70,000 inhabitants.

² November 1881-January 1882.

Gambetta died; and soon afterwards a collision between the Houses caused the fall of two ministries.¹ A manifesto by Prince Napoleon, criticising the Government, moved the Chamber to demand, for the affront of a Bonaparte, the proscription of all the families which had reigned in France. The Liberal senators, who were supported by a few doctrinaire Radicals in the Lower House, repudiated the idea that the Republic should follow the example of the Monarchy of July and the Second Empire in proscribing a certain category of citizens. The Senate adhered to this principle, so the third ministry which had taken part in the fray ended it by means of a Presidential Decree putting on the retired list the Orleans Princes who were officers in the army; and abstract admirers of the British Constitution had to find consolation in the slight analogy furnished by Mr. Gladstone's Royal Warrant of 1871, wherewith he had nullified the opposition of the Peers to the wishes of the House of Commons.

IV

The reform of the Senate was undertaken in 1884, a phenomenal date in the history of the Third Republic, as, since the system of Cabinets formed by a responsible Minister was adopted, it was the first year which revolved from January to December without a change of government—a prodigy only twice again repeated.² The Prime Minister, M. Jules Ferry, in introducing the project of revision declared that its purpose was to restore harmony between the two Chambers; but no question

¹ January-February 1883.

² From the nomination of M. Thiers as Chief of the Executive in February 1871, to his resignation of the Presidency of the Republic in May 1873, he exercised the functions of President of the Council, M. Dufaure being a permanent Vice-President; and though the ministry on M. Thiers' retirement contained only two of its original members, it never retired as a body. Marshal MacMahon followed the same practice till after the passing of the Constitutional Laws of 1875, but with this difference—the nominal Vice-President was in reality Prime Minister, giving his name to the ministry for the time being, and causing its downfall when he retired. The second occasion since 1873 on which a government outlasted a whole year from January 1 to December 31 was in 1891, when the fourth Freycinet Cabinet, constituted in March 1890, survived till February 1892. The Méline ministry repeated the prodigy in 1897.

on which conflict had arisen was dealt with.¹ The reason was that by the terms of the Constitution the Chamber had no power to force the Senate to join it in Congress, whereby alone constitutional revision could be affected: it could only prevail on that body thus to meet it by agreeing beforehand on the subjects to be discussed. M. Léon Say while declaring himself in favour of electoral reform of the Upper House, said that nothing would induce him to vote for a Congress unless it were guaranteed that the financial prerogatives of the Senate should not be brought into discussion.² As the large majority of the Senators of all parties agreed with him, revision would have been indefinitely postponed had the Chamber insisted on pressing that question.

The parliamentary skill of M. Ferry, of which the duration of his ministry for the unparalleled term of two years³ was to be the monument, saved the situation. He persuaded the Chamber that the question of interest to the country was the electoral reform of the Senate, to secure which it was worth while to sacrifice a trifling matter of intra-parliamentary economy. Consequently, when the Congress met, all that it did affecting the Senate was to withdraw from the Constitutional Law the clauses regulating the election of the Upper Chamber. The Senate agreed that they were of organic rather than of constitutional character;—and as the principle of two Chambers was secured by the first article of the Constitution of 1875, it seemed more convenient to put senatorial elections on the same legal footing as those of the Chamber of Deputies.⁴

¹ *Chambre des Députés, Séance du 24 Mai 1884.*

² *Sénat, Séance du 24 Juillet 1884.*

³ February 1883–March 1885. The Méline ministry 1896–1898 lasted not quite so long.

⁴ In addition to the withdrawal of their constitutional character from the articles 1 to 7 of the Law of February 24, 1875, the Constitutional Law of August 13–14, 1884, contained only three articles: one relative to the limit of time within which the elections and assembling of Parliament should take place in case of dissolution by the President; another enacting that the Republican form of government could never be made the subject of revision, and that members of families which had reigned in France were not eligible for the presidency; and the third repealing a regulation which prescribed public prayers in the churches on the Sunday after the re-assembling of Parliament—a symptom of the anti-clerical fever which was at its height under M. Ferry's administrations.

The history of these proceedings is instructive. It shows how an Upper Chamber, established in a democratic state and elected by a restricted Franchise, could, at a moment when reactionary forces had shrunk into effeteness, when democracy was triumphant, and republican institutions were not discredited, refuse to have its prerogatives infringed at the bidding of a popular House elected by manhood suffrage. That the safeguards of the senatorial position were found in a constitution drawn up by a monarchical assembly makes it more significant, as that fact might have provoked the electorate into a hostile attitude. Nothing of the sort happened; and if in a country prone to revolution the pretensions of a Second Chamber were thus submitted to, it is probable that in calmer communities an Upper House, constructed on quasi-democratic lines, would exercise, with impunity, powers of obstruction such as no ancient and anomalous institution would venture to put forth.

If the French Senate, after preserving its prerogatives untouched, has not obstructed, one reason may be that it has had little to obstruct. Its rejection of laws sent up to it from the Lower House is rare, for, as we shall presently see, the Chamber of Deputies does not conceive that the chief function of a legislature is to legislate. Indeed in this respect the Senate sets a pattern of diligence to the popular assembly, constantly framing projects of public utility which never become law, as the Chamber has no time to deal with them. In 1884 the chief feeling which attended the passing of the new Constitutional Law was one of relief that the French nation, for the first time since it had enjoyed political life, had revised a constitution by pacific means. This consoled critics who thought the result somewhat slender after three years of controversy.

The reform of the Senate had thus to be accomplished by ordinary legislative procedure. The most important change in its organisation was the repeal of the clause relating to irremovable senators. In spite of a remarkable speech of M. Schérer, in which he defended with profound philosophy the

retention of the irremovable element,¹ the Left Centre abandoned the principle of nomination. The Senators were influenced not only by the opinion in the country adverse to the irremovable system, but also by the fear that if it were retained it would be necessary to accept a scheme whereby the "irremovables" would be nominated by a Congress of the two Houses. The prospect of thus permitting the Chamber of Deputies to interfere with its composition was more repugnant to the Senate than any loss of privilege. This was only a symptom of the mutual jealousy which always exists between Upper and Lower Houses of Legislature. The more nearly they resemble one another in origin and in character the keener is the antagonism likely to be.

The entire Senate thus became an elective body.² The electoral colleges under the new organic law³ were composed of the same elements as before. The reform consisted in the increase of the number of the municipal delegates in proportion to the population of the communes. The smallest continued to name one senatorial elector apiece, while the largest each sent twenty-four to the electoral college.⁴ This corrected to some extent the disproportionate weight given to the rural communes by the National Assembly, but the disproportion was not

¹ Sénat, Séance du 4 Nov. 1884.

² The Senate continued to consist of 300 members. The irremovable senators, named by the National Assembly and by the Senate, retained their life appointments; but pending their death or resignation their 75 seats were nominally distributed among the departments according to population. Thus the Seine and the Nord, which under the old law had each five senators, now became entitled to ten and nine respectively, and the representation of all the others, except the ten least populous, was raised proportionately. It was enacted that as each vacancy took place among the irremovables, the department to elect a senator in his place should be decided by lot until all had their full complement—which will not happen till the twentieth century, as the irremovables are a long-lived race. The rule of 1875 was retained that senators should be elected for nine years, a third of the number being re-elected every three years. The system of the triennial renewal of the House was retained. All the departments were divided into three series, the senators of each series in its turn all presenting themselves for re-election, no matter whether they had served the whole term of nine years or had only just entered the Senate.

³ Loi du 9 Décembre 1884.

⁴ The number of councillors in each municipal council is regulated according to the population of the communes by the "Loi du 5 Avril 1884," the smallest communes, those of under 500 inhabitants, having councils of 10. The organic law enacted that the councils composed of 10 members should elect 1 delegate,

removed. In the Gironde, for example, the 24 delegates of Bordeaux represent a quarter of a million inhabitants, while among the 550 communes of that vast department there are groups returning 24 delegates which, all combined, have not a fiftieth of the population of Bordeaux.¹ On the other hand, if that city, which contains one-third of the entire population of the Gironde, were to nominate one-third of the municipal delegates, as the influence of a great town always extends beyond its boundaries, it is probable that the majority of the electoral college would express the voice of Bordeaux and its dependencies to the extinction of rural representation. Critics of the law of 1884 assert that it has given the preponderance to the little towns. They point out that while Lyons has only one delegate for every 22,000 inhabitants and Marseilles one for 17,000, the towns of which the population ranges from 3000 to 5000 have one delegate for every 500 inhabitants; the advantage enjoyed by the rural communes under the law of 1875 being transferred to small urban centres. Such criticisms only indicate the difficulty of devising a system of indirect election so as to procure symmetrical representation.

The new law² in no wise adjusted the relations of the two Houses, and the old controversy was swiftly renewed on the budget which was discussed in the Chamber actually before the reform of the Senate became law. The senatorial elections³ had further increased the great Republican majority in the Upper House. Its attitude therefore could not be imputed to the Reactionaries, though the subject of discord was the reduction made in the Budget of Public Worship by the Chamber, which those of 12 members 2 delegates, those of 16 members 3 delegates, and so on, up to councils composed of 36 members and over, which should elect 24 delegates. A special provision was made for Paris: its municipal council of 80 members was accorded 30 senatorial delegates.

¹ The 24 smallest communes of the Gironde (which together return 24 delegates) have a united population of 3000, or less than an eightieth of that of Bordeaux.

² Its only other provisions related to the qualifications of senatorial candidates. Members of the families which had reigned in France were made ineligible, as also officers in the army and navy excepting the marshals, the admirals, and certain categories of generals.

³ January 25, 1885.

persevered in the policy of strife-stirring anti-clericalism likely to be associated with the name of M. Jules Ferry long after his remarkable abilities are forgotten. The Senate restored certain votes reduced by the Chamber, tending to straiten the education of the clergy and to diminish their salaries.¹ The total rejection of the senatorial amendments was proposed. The commission of the Chamber appointed to consider them declined to go so far; though it laid down the abstract proposition that the Lower House had the right to finally settle the Budget on its being sent back to them without referring it to the Senate a second time. This was a declaration of the complete supremacy of the Chamber in financial matters, begging the whole question at issue. In the end the Chamber accepted one of the inserted votes while the Senate withdrew the others. The Republican groups of senators, who could not be suspected of clerical leanings, declared by the mouth of the aged Hippolyte Carnot that, while they gave way for reasons of State, in order not to bring public affairs to a deadlock, the rights of the Upper House in matters financial were co-equal with those of the Lower.²

It is important to notice the chief argument with which the thesis was supported. It was the general principle that the superiority of a Lower Chamber in matters financial is admissible only when it is the sole elective branch of the Legislature. It was urged that if under the Second Empire the Senate had to accept the Budget of the Corps Législatif it was because the former was a nominated body;³ and that if in the mother of Parliaments, looked up to by all constitutional governments, the

¹ In restoring certain votes the Senate laid down the sound principle that it ought not to be competent for Parliament to repeal laws by the indirect method of withholding supply; but when the compromise was made with the Chamber the Senate did not stand out for the particular votes involving that principle.

² Séance du 21 Mars 1885.

³ It is of course useless to look to the Second Empire for any precedents in parliamentary government. M. Jules Simon, during the controversy between the Senate and the Chamber in 1885, related that during the reign of Napoleon III. the principle was accepted that the Senate, being a nominated body, could not interfere with the financial proposals of the elected Corps Législatif, till 1870, when, under the Liberal Empire, parliamentary reform was talked about. It was then

House of Commons is paramount in finance, it is because the House of Lords is an hereditary and nominated assembly. Reformers of the English Constitution may be thereby reminded of what might possibly happen if our Upper Chamber were reconstructed. The idea has lost ground that its reform will be demanded by the imperious will of the people, formulated by its deputies in the House of Commons. It is more generally believed that the re-edification of the House of Peers, if ever essayed, will be effected on lines traced by its own members. It is inconceivable that an assembly, dignified with centuries of tradition, should voluntarily descend from its venerable place among the legislatures of the world to become the newest of constitutional experiments, without substantial compensation. If thus the House of Lords, in becoming a quasi-representative body, secured the right to interfere in matters of finance, the practical consequence would be perpetual strife between the two Chambers, aggravated by undreamed-of powers of obstruction on the part of the remodelled assembly. The historical result would be the transformation of the Upper House of Parliament into an institution less interesting than the improvised legislative council of our youngest colony ; while the Commons' House would forfeit a privilege held for five hundred¹ years, or would only retain it as a maimed and disputed appanage.

The year after the conflict just related saw the advent to office of General Boulanger, who, at first protected by the Radicals, soon became the incarnation of the growing discontent with the Republican regime. It was then that the Senate displayed its conservative character—conservative not in the sense of monarchical, but as representing the middle-class sentiment, which in France is always in favour of retaining the existing form of govern-

proposed that the Senate and the so-called popular Assembly should be put on the same footing with regard to taxation, but the proposal was withdrawn, as it was discovered that by the law they had precisely the same rights. During the whole reign, which was to end a few months later, no one had had the curiosity to examine the text of the Constitution (Sénat, Séance du 20 Mars 1885).

¹ In 9 Hen. IV. (1408) the exclusive right of the Commons to originate money bills was laid down as a maxim of Parliamentary law (Hallam, *Middle Ages*, c. viii. pt. 3).

ment; whereas the democratic Chamber is more liable to reflect the tendency towards Caesarism latent in the national character.

As the Boulangist movement began and ended in the interval between two general elections of the Chamber,¹ the action of the Senate was not necessary to save the Republic, its Republican majority never being confronted with a Boulangist majority in the Chamber. It is, however, probable that the existence of the Senate restrained the deputies from adhering to Boulangism in numbers sufficient to make it prevail. The temptation to the ordinary politician was considerable. The bye-elections indicated that, if a dissolution took place, few candidates, Radical or Reactionary, not labelled as Boulangist, would be returned. The General had been invented by the Radical Revisionists, and in spite of the attachment of the Monarchists to his fortunes he had not ceased to parade his republicanism. Republicans could therefore accept his lead without any show of apostasy. In every civic upheaval, especially in countries prone to revolution, there is always a floating body of politicians ready to drift to the winning side. Self-preservation is the strongest of human instincts; and in this case it seemed at one time that the only means for a representative of the people to retain his political existence would be to accept the lead of this soldier of fortune. A number of deputies sufficient to give him a majority in the Chamber² might have been induced to go over to him but for the feeling that the Senate stood in the way of any attempt on the Constitution, pending an appeal to the constituencies. The entire Upper House was a solid anti-Boulangist force. The Republican senators, being independent of the caprices of universal suffrage, had no inducement to repudiate their doctrine and to

¹ At the 1885 elections the existence of General Boulanger was unknown to the nation, and before those of 1889 he had fled the country.

² Even after the flight of General Boulanger (April 1889), when his prestige in the country had received a fatal blow, 213 deputies in the Chamber voted against the law regulating the procedure of the High Court for his trial, the majority numbering 309. Fifty of the minority were Republicans, described as Radical Socialists, or "Boulangistes et députés qui étaient tout prêts à le devenir." The last category, which had been on the increase for a prolonged period, began appreciably to wane from this date. (*Année Politique*, Avril 1889.)

trifle with plebiscitary enterprises ; while the reactionary minority was chiefly composed of Monarchists distressed at the alliance of the Comte de Paris with the General who had driven the Duc d'Aumale from the army.

The Constitutional Law provides that the Senate can be resolved, by a decree of the President in Council, into a court to try any person charged with offences against the security of the State.¹ This power was put into action against General Boulanger and his alleged accomplices, MM. Rochefort and Dillon, in 1889. Permission having been obtained of the Chamber to proceed against one of its members,² the President of the Republic convoked the Senate in its capacity of a High Court of Justice. The procedure in a French criminal inquiry was followed, including a secret "instruction," conducted by senators, and a public trial presided over by the President of the Senate assisted by the Public Prosecutor. The accused in their absence were condemned almost unanimously ;³ the senators of the Right not taking any part in the judgment, and explaining their abstention by a declaration of incompetence. This concluding scene of the performance, which had occupied France for three years, emphasised the fact that, next to General Boulanger himself, the most formidable obstruction to Boulangism had been the Senate. Whether its resistance to the movement would have availed anything without the assistance of M. Boulanger is another question.

The conflict between the Senate and the Chamber in 1896 need only be mentioned on account of the attitude of the nation towards the quarrel. The Senate had reversed several votes of the Chamber, the majority in which for the moment was supporting the Radical ministry of M. Bourgeois. Before the Easter holidays the Upper House had given way on certain points at issue. The Prime Minister with some skill had tried to turn the dispute into a constitutional question, and hinted that if the Senate persisted in opposing the popular Chamber a popular uprising might be provoked. However, during the vacation the majority of the

¹ L.C. 24 Fév 1875, art. 9 ; 16 Juillet 1875, art. 12.

² April 4, 1889.

³ August 14, 1889.

departmental councils at their spring session passed resolutions condemning the fiscal policy of the government. As the members of those bodies are senatorial electors, and are themselves the elect of universal suffrage, they thus indirectly intimated to the Senate that its opposition to the ministry was not contrary to the will of the country. On re-assembling it therefore took the bold step of refusing to discuss the credits for the Madagascar expedition. The spokesman of the chief Republican groups explained that the majority had no intention of withholding the money ; but as the Cabinet had clung to office in spite of a thrice-repeated vote of no confidence in the Senate, they intended to bring affairs to a deadlock, to force the ministry into resignation. The Chamber was still in vacation ; and it is significant of the working of the parliamentary system in France that the Lower House should give itself longer holidays than the Upper. It was hastily summoned, and the Prime Minister read a fiery declaration from the tribune¹ to the effect that in the interest of business he and his colleagues would resign, but that the people would ask the reason why. The Chamber protested against the action of the Senate by a slender majority. The Bourgeois ministry resigned : M. Méline formed a "moderate" Cabinet to replace it : and the Radical-Socialist journals were full of revolutionary fury for a week—but nothing else occurred. There was no fighting in the streets of Paris, nor even the faintest interest shown in the crisis by the population. Not only was the Senate justified in its attitude by the perfect indifference of the electorate, but the Chamber itself, with that incoherency which characterises French parliamentary proceedings, at once gave a vote of confidence to the new ministry, which it kept in office for an unwontedly long period.

The record of the relations between the two French Chambers during the twenty years after their creation is instructive to students of parliamentary institutions. It shows how two Houses of Legislature, composed of similar social and political elements may be animated with a totally different spirit. It likewise

¹ April 23, 1896.

displays the power which an Upper House in a democratic State can use against a Lower Chamber elected on a more popular basis. We shall, however, see that in its exercise that power is not as effective as it might be.

V

The tendency of the French at all times is to explain and to regard each of their political changes and institutions as the illustration of an idea ;—from the Revolution, which, being the inevitable result of financial and fiscal disorder, was glorified as the era of human emancipation and fraternity, to the Third Republic, which, being the fortuitous offspring of monarchical disagreements, was treated as the return of the nation to the diluted doctrine of 1792. The French are in many respects a practical people, especially in legislative matters, as their adoption of the codified system attests. But their great Revolution having occurred at an epoch steeped in the theories of philosophers, they have never lost the habit of referring to an idea every phase and function of civic life, even when utilitarian in origin. The lines on which the Senate was constructed in 1875 had no scientific basis. The National Assembly, feeling that time enough had been spent on its constituent work, created a Second Chamber on a model which seemed serviceable, and adapted its electorate out of existing organisations. We have seen that Gambetta, who took little part in devising the Senate, described it as the “grand council of the communes.” But that was a skilful adoption by a consummate strategist of an institution which he disliked but was compelled to accept. If the National Assembly had intended to erect a “grand council of the communes,” it would not have filled a fourth part of it with nominated irremovables ; nor would it have adulterated the produce of the communes with elements taken from the arrondissements and the departments. The Parliament of 1884 put an end to the nomination of senators ; but it did not withdraw from the electoral colleges the members of the departmental and district councils or the deputies. Nevertheless, such is the determination of the French to see an idea represented in everything

of human institution, that a theory exists that the Senate springs from the necessity of having alongside of the Chamber, which represents individuals, a second assembly representing social groups; and that among these groups the only one, by its rooted stability in the land, sufficiently solid to be endowed with political representation, is the commune.

The attitude of the communes of France, rural and urban, is one of indifference, both as to the choice of their delegates by the Municipal Council, and as to the Senator selected by those delegates. In the debates of the National Assembly fear was expressed that the nomination of senatorial electors by the communes might turn every municipal council into a "Club," like those redoubtable organisations which, after 1789, made the villages of France centres of revolution.¹ Even now provincial administrators, of the type which does greatest credit to the system of local government, regret that they are thus forced to take cognisance of political divisions. But as a rule the rural municipalities slumberously perform their useful functions with no thought of reviving the Jacobin sodalities which flourished under the Convention. If the senators at the Luxembourg are inspired with their soporific spirit, the result is accidental; for as a matter of fact the communes have little voice in the selection of senators. Their delegates, when they go to the poll, have always to choose between candidates nominated by the deputies of the department or by the active members of the conseil-général. In a somewhat wide acquaintance with French provincial life, I have never been able to ascertain in a commune, whether market-town or hamlet, the names of the delegates at the last senatorial election without special inquiry of the local officials. In the village shop, in the rustic inn, every one knows the mayor and the vice-mayor; while the leader of the "fanfare" is a celebrity, and the captain of the "pompiers" a hero. But one may ask in vain who has been the repository of the spirit of the commune. Sometimes even a blue-bloused colleague of the

¹ By the organic law of 1875 Municipal Councils are forbidden to enter into any discussion before proceeding to the secret ballot of their senatorial delegates.

council-board, if questioned unawares, cannot recall who were the peasant envoys privileged one Sunday to travel at the cost of the department to its capital, and there to vote for senators.¹

It is interesting to notice this tendency of the French to graft on existing institutions, in order to explain their origin and purpose, an idea unconceived by the institution-makers, as the English practice is the exact converse. There still survive in our country legal fictions, judicial and other offices, as well as portions of our constitutional fabric, which owe their origin to ideas forgotten in the mist of ages. The idea is recognised and kept in remembrance only by antiquaries; but the institution founded on it thrives and performs practical functions in the modern state. No instance is more striking than that of the legislative chamber, corresponding in the British Constitution to the Senate in the French. Neither the defenders nor the detractors of the House of Lords can refer to its origin as a reason for its preservation, its reform, or its abolition. The respectable clergymen of connubial habits, whose lawn-sleeves illumine the right reverend bench, by no strained comparison can have their position in the nation likened to that of the celibate prelates and abbots of the Middle Ages who represented in the Great Council the then universal Church. Nor have the hereditary peers, whether their ancestors illustrated Tudor statecraft or the commerce of a less picturesque age, anything in common with the feudal order which in the beginning composed the Second Estate of the realm. Indeed, the idea from which the Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal derived their origin may be said to have disappeared from England centuries ago, though in France it survived to the

¹ As a matter of practice, in the small communes nominating only one senatorial elector, the mayor is almost invariably chosen. The formalities prescribed before a delegate can receive his trifling indemnity for travelling expenses are characteristic of the bureaucratic system. A municipal councillor is entitled to half a franc for each kilomètre of the double journey between his commune and the capital of the department. At the close of the election he endorses with the claim his letter of convocation, and hands it to the presiding officer, the judge of the local civil tribunal, who verifies it and transmits it to the préfet. The préfet forwards it to the treasurer-general of the department, who signs an order for payment and returns it to the préfet, who then addresses it to the mayor of the commune where the elector resides. The latter receives it from the mayor, and takes it to the tax-assessor of the canton, who at last pays him the money.

Revolution. But the institution founded thereon has outlasted it so long that one of the rifest errors cherished by every class of the English people is to confound the Estates, and not to apprehend that two of them are contained in the House of Lords.¹

It is useful to observe this mental attitude of the two peoples towards their respective institutions, as it may partly explain the failure in France of English importations, such as the parliamentary system. It is also a reason why the working of the French machinery of government does not offer more valuable suggestions for practical application in Anglo-Saxon communities.

If the Senate were in reality Gambetta's "Grand Council of the Communes," expressing the voice of the 36,000 municipalities, rural and urban, it would take a more prominent place in the economy of the Republic. The reasons why, in spite of its increased representative character, its importance has declined in the working of the constitutional machine are interesting to examine, as they are not those usually cited as causing a Second Chamber to be overshadowed by a popular Assembly.

If in a legislature we find on the one hand an Upper House in no sense representative of the people, whether hereditary, nominated, or elected on a high franchise, and on the other a Lower House, chosen by the widest suffrage, in which a solid majority proclaims in distinct tones the decided will of the nation, the presumption arises that the essential condition for the existence of the Second Chamber is, that it accept a position subordinate to the popular Assembly. But the French Senate is chosen by the elect of universal suffrage; and the Chamber of Deputies, though directly representing the masses of the population, never contains a majority stable enough to keep a ministry in office for even half the span of a quadrennial parliament. The Senate always has a compact majority in general sympathy with the views prevailing in the country. If then it felt that it was supported by the strength of all the communes of France, it

¹ "A notion is entertained by many people, and not without the authority of some very respectable names, that the King is one of the three estates of the realm, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal forming together the second, as the Commons in Parliament is the third" (Hallam, *Middle Ages*, c. viii, part 3).

is strange that it should not oftener put forth that strength in taking the initiative out of the hands of an Assembly which, though elected by universal suffrage, constantly shows, by its incoherencies, that it is not the mandatory of the definite will of the nation.

There is nothing in the Constitution which prescribes for the Senate a position of inferiority to the Chamber. This was made clear in the discussions on the revision of 1884. Yet though the Senate then asserted its right to exercise powers coextensive with those of the Chamber—powers which might be very formidable in the hands of an energetic Upper House,—it has usually been content with the academic affirmation of a principle.

Perhaps the most curious feature of the relations of the Houses is the indifference of the nation to their controversies. Whether the Senate acts boldly, as in 1896, and upsets a Ministry supported by the Chamber, or whether it attenuates a surrender by making a dignified protest, the population of France looks on unmoved. In 1893, for example, the Ribot Cabinet fell, in consequence of a dispute between the two Chambers on the Budget. The incoming Prime Minister, M. Dupuy, in his long declaration¹ on taking office, did not even mention the cause of the crisis, or that there was any discord between the two Houses. Moreover, at the general elections for the Chamber that summer, far from the electorate being asked to pronounce upon the pretensions of the Senate, it may safely be affirmed that not one voter in a thousand was aware that there had been a difference between the two branches of the Legislature.

Of this indifference in matters political, widespread among all classes in France, the insignificance of the Senate is a symptom and a reflection. If each of its acts were closely scanned by an electorate jealous of the rights of its direct representatives,—if the abolition of the Senate inscribed on the programme of Radical deputies were the rallying cry of a popular agitation,—no doubt the potency of the Upper Chamber would be

¹ April 6, 1893.

invigorated ; for in politics it is more profitable, both for institutions and for men, to be traduced than to be ignored. The term insignificance I do not use in an offensive sense, but as expressing the sentiment of active members of the Senate who regret their corporate self-effacement. They complain, for example, that, without any warrant in the Constitution, it has become an established practice that the Cabinet is responsible only to the Chamber of Deputies ; and though the Senate was once able to turn out a ministry, its unanimous confidence would not avail to keep a ministry in office in the face of an adverse vote of an improvised majority in the Chamber. As the Republican majority of the Senate, though divided into groups,¹ is essentially governmental in its instincts, it is certain that the average duration of ministries would be longer if their lives were in the hands of the senators, and the government of the country would be less unstable. The tranquil doctrinaires of the Luxembourg console themselves that in leaving the fate of Cabinets to the Lower Chamber they are following the constitutional tradition of the British Parliament. If it adds to the dignity of an elective Senate thus to be invested with the disabling attributes of an hereditary house, to pursue the comparison further does not enhance the consolation ; for while the unrepresentative House of Lords supplies on an average nearly one-half of the members of English Cabinets, in France less than one-fifth of the ministerial portfolios are bestowed on the Senate, grand council of the communes though it be.²

¹ The groups of the Senate at the end of the century are the *Centre Gauche*, the *Gauche Républicaine*, the *Union Républicaine*, and the *Gauche Démocratique*, which is Radical. A small Radical-Socialist coterie has also made its appearance. The Reactionaries are too few to be divided into Royalists, Bonapartists, etc. ; all are included in the *Droite*.

² Since 1880 the average number of peers in successive English Cabinets, Liberal and Conservative, seems to have been between seven and eight. In the fifteen French ministries after M. Carnot became President in 1887, there were on an average less than two senators in every Cabinet, which up to 1893, consisted of ten Ministers, and since that date of eleven. The average is raised by M. de Freycinet, who was a Senator, and who remained at the War Office during five consecutive ministries. A milder grievance of the Senate is that the Ministerial Declaration, made on the forming of each new government, is never read in the Senate by the Prime Minister, even though he be a Senator, the Upper House having to be content with the accents of a subordinate colleague. As Ministers, whether

The unimportance of the Senate cannot proceed from the superior prestige of the Chamber of Deputies. For reasons to be examined presently, the popular Assembly does not stand high in the estimation of the French nation. The causes of the Senate's lack of influence must be looked for within its own composition.

VI

If a legislative body fail to occupy a position of influence in a state, it is either because it lacks members whose qualities inspire admiration and attract support, or because it is not truly representative of great interests or of masses of opinion in the commonwealth. The French Senate, it is to be feared, is afflicted with both these disabilities. If its composition at the end of the century be analysed, it will be found to be not worthy of the French nation. The majority of its members are men of respectable parts, competent to treat with intelligence the public questions of the hour. But they are not the most capable that France contains, and, apart from their local renown, they are usually unknown beyond the precincts of the Luxembourg. Now all who have seriously studied legislative systems know how chimerical is the fancy of amateur constitution-makers who imagine Second Chambers filled with brilliant representatives of every human science and calling. There is a mean between that phantasy and an almost complete exclusion of celebrity and genius from a Senate, as is the case in France where men eminent in pursuits which fortify the faculties of legislators not only abound, but are conspicuously classed in a great corporation which is the nation's chief pride.

senators, deputies, or not members of Parliament at all, have the right to sit in both Chambers during their term of office, this rule has actually had the effect of causing the Ministerial Declaration to be read to the Deputies by a Senator, and to the Senate by a Deputy. This happened when the Loubet ministry was formed in 1892. M. Loubet was a Senator, and as Prime Minister he had to quit his own House to read the Declaration at the Palais Bourbon, the only other Senator in the ministry being M. de Freycinet, who had just been turned out as Premier but kept on as Minister of War. As the programme of the new government could not be read by the recently dismissed Prime Minister, it had perforce to be imparted to the Senate by a Deputy, M. Ricard being chosen for the task.

The elected members of the Senate (not counting the survivors of the nominated system, who belong to a past order of things) are of about the same number as the members of the Institute of France, than which no modern community has ever contained a body more representative of the national forces of intellect and knowledge. There is no region of the land which has not contributed some of its members, and no social class, from the descendants of the ancient lords of the soil to the peasantry which tills it to-day. There is no political or religious tenet held by Frenchmen which is not illustrated in that company. Within it believers in the principle of absolutism are the colleagues of utopian theorists of the Revolution; and the dogmatism of Rome is as welcome there as the boldest negation of free-thought. Nor are the members of the Institute, with all their learning, recluses mildewed in the dust of folios. Many of them are brilliant citizens of the world, who have the gift not only of instructing students with their pens, but of moving men with the eloquence of their tongues. This is true both of those who are masters of the theories of government and of jurisprudence, and of some of those whose European renown has been won in the gayer arts or the profounder sciences. That being so, it might be thought that the senatorial electors would not unfrequently choose to represent their political views men who had attained the supreme grade that France can confer on intellect.

Of the 260 members of the five Academies which meet in the Palais Mazarin, fifty would not seem to be an excessive number to find among the elected senators at the neighbouring Luxembourg. They would form less than one-fifth of the departmental delegates, and more than 200 places would be left for the representatives of industry, agriculture, the army, and interests of purely local order. But if the lists of the Senate be examined, membership of the Institute of France seems to be regarded as an absolute disqualification at the end of the century, for of the elected senators only three belong to the Institute. It may be thought that the departments do wisely in not sending to the Senate a horde of professors to legislate for them. No doubt the

prospect of fifty lecturers from Oxford or from Glasgow sitting in a British house of legislature would strike their possible colleagues and the public with alarm. But the members of the Institute, excepting a minority specially engaged in teaching, are neither professors nor tainted with professorial failings; nor are they imbued with that local tint which colours all that comes forth from isolated seats of learning. Moreover, the electoral colleges, in shunning the Institute, do not give the preference to persons who have developed the commerce of the department, or improved its cultivation, or in any way added to its riches or repute. In most cases the elected Senators are second-rate exponents of the callings practised in perfection by the members of the Institute.

The benches of the Senate have, under the Republic, never been adorned by M. Pasteur,¹ M. Taine, or M. Renan; but they swarm with country doctors, with publicists unknown to fame, and with minor prophets of free-thought. One seeks in vain for the authorities who make the civilised world look to the dome of the Institute for instruction in many a branch of legislative and economic science, in the principles of colonisation, and in jurisprudence; though there are few departments which do not send to the Luxembourg a provincial lawyer, a doctor, or a journalist. If I have mentioned the absence from the elected Senate of members of the Institute, it is because that body contains so many of the choicest intellects of special qualifications that an assembly which is rarely recruited from it cannot command a lofty position in the commonwealth. It must not be thought that the members of the five Academies are disqualified by reason of their reactionary opinions. When, in 1895, the Radicals for the first time formed a homogeneous Cabinet, it was an irremovable senator, and an eminent Member of the Institute, M. Berthelot, who was selected to represent the Extreme Left before Europe as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

If the roll of elected senators be examined, it is remarkable how few of the names convey any idea, even to Frenchmen who

¹ M Pasteur was nominated senator under the Empire shortly before the war.

take interest in politics. It is to be feared that the names even of old Ministers must be included in that unrecognised category. There are about a score of them among the elected senators at the Luxembourg. A stranger might think that an assembly containing so many persons who had directed the affairs of their country would exercise a certain authority in the minds of men. Unhappily for France, the career of politics does not now cover with glory those who pursue it even with success. It may be affirmed that since the death of Gambetta, himself an example of the ungratefulness of the trade of politician, no one who has become conspicuous as a Minister has gained the lasting esteem of his countrymen. Whether any have deserved it is another question.

The most striking instance of political success provoking public disfavour was that of M. Jules Ferry. The very fact of his evincing statesmanlike qualities, rarely developed under the Third Republic, seemed to bring down upon him the rancour, not of the clerical Reactionaries to whom he had given just cause for resentment, but of a large section of his fellow-republicans who pursued him from power with a fury as vindictive as though he had been the enemy of his country. Rejected by popular suffrage in his native Vosges, he took refuge in the Senate. There his election to the Presidency of that assembly, the second post of dignity in the Republic, would have seemed to compensate years of ostracism had not death struck him on the morrow of his taking possession of the chair, thus ending with fatal consistency a career which well displayed the vanity of human ambition. His kinsman, M. Floquet, long deputy for the turbulent quarter of Paris where the hostages were shot by the Commune, with which uprising he was reputed to sympathise, likewise sought a senator's seat on which to end his days when discarded by electors who certainly had not given him their confidence in the belief that he was an upholder of Second Chambers.

The upward flight of MM. Ferry and Floquet has been reversed by other politicians. For the Senate differs from other superior stages of existence, both celestial and terrene, in that

those who have been elevated thither may return to the nether world of universal suffrage. Thus M. Goblet, who for more than five months was Prime Minister of France, was beaten at Amiens, where he was a magnate of note, by a Boulangist stranger. But the asylum he obtained in the Luxembourg did not, in the words of the inspired biographer of the Chamber of Deputies, content his feverish activity, and after three years in that calm atmosphere, he was sent back for a brief season to the Palais Bourbon as Radical Socialist member for Paris.

There was a much more eminent senator who descended to the Lower House without previous experience of its attractions. M. Léou Say had sat for thirteen years in the Senate, ever since its creation, in which he had taken no small part. He had been its President in the interval between his embassy to London and his seventh tenure of the portfolio of finance. He left it to seek a seat in the popular House, which contained but a small group in sympathy with his opinions, at a period when there was no prospect of a statesman of his type ever being included in a ministry. His defection testified that, though the Chamber did not stand high in the eyes of the nation, it was better for a solitary voice of authority to be raised sometimes amid its turmoil than to grow faint in the stagnant air of the Senate.

The stagnancy of the Senate is a curious phenomenon, when it is considered that that quality has become manifest only since its nominated element has ceased to be renewed. It is interesting to notice that Gambetta was, on the eve of his death, in favour of retaining the system of nomination. Other Republicans, who object to it on principle, acknowledge that while it lasted the Upper House contained much of the best talent of France, and was worthier of a great nation than now. At that period the roll of elected senators too contained some of the most eminent names in France. When the Senate commenced its career in 1876, its nominated section included Mgr. Dupanloup, Generals Changarnier and Chanzy, MM. Littré, Hippolyte Carnot, Casimir-Périer (père), Schérer, Lanfrey, Barthélemy St. Hilaire, and Jules Simon. There were elected members not

less distinguished, such as MM. Thiers, Victor Hugo, Jules Favre, Henri Martin, Waddington, de Broglie, Léon Say, and Marshal Canrobert. At the end of the century but for the aged relics of the nominated element the benches of the Senate would be almost destitute of celebrity.

There are various reasons for the decadence of type of elected senators. In the first place, Frenchmen as illustrious as MM. Thiers and Victor Hugo, if any survive, no longer take part in politics. Secondly, the spread of Republicanism has reduced the number of departments open to monarchical senators; and as those which have remained anti-republican prefer to elect local personages, it is impossible for the rare Reactionaries of distinction, like the Duc de Broglie,¹ to find a constituency. Again, the antipathy prevalent in political France for conspicuous ability has infected the Republican electoral colleges. The rejection of M. Waddington, shortly before his death, by the Aisne, where he was President of the Conseil-Général, in favour of an obscure person, was chiefly due to this; and such treatment of the most accomplished servants of the Republic does not elevate the standard of legislative candidates. Finally, there is the phenomenon observed in all assemblies of recent creation in all communities. When an elective body, local or national, is new, it attracts the ablest and most prominent; but having none of the prestige of tradition, when the novelty is dimmed the better class shrink from the irksomeness of contest, leaving functions, no matter how important, to be competed for by less capable hands.

A brief review of a senatorial election throws considerable light on the composition of the Upper House. We will not take an extreme case, but will examine one which resulted in the election of an unusually distinguished senator. The department is chiefly agricultural, containing one large industrial town. The population is 300,000, and its character is so Republican that

¹ The Duc de Broglie was senator for the Eure from 1876 to 1885. At the elections in the latter year, when he was defeated, more than half of the monarchical seats which then fell vacant (22 out of 42) were filled by Republicans.

the Reactionaries rarely contest a seat for either Chamber. The candidates for the vacant senatorship are therefore all Republicans of not very diverse hues. It might be thought that as party conflicts were in abeyance here, the rivalry would be between the manufacturing interests of the chief-town and the corn-growers and stock-raisers of the rural districts ; or that the contest would be fought on free-trade and protection, as the department is on the frontier. Nothing of the sort is suggested in the vague and lengthy election addresses of the five candidates. The first is a retired notary and mayor of a picturesque village, who employs his leisure in contributing to a local Radical journal. The second, also a lawyer, practises in the chief-town, where he is mayor, in which capacity he was decorated : like his rural rival he calls himself a Radical. The third is a village doctor, a freemason of rank, supported by the deputy of his arrondissement. The fourth is another active freemason, a professor who lives in Paris, patronised by one of the senators of the department, as well as by the deputy of the district, in which he has a small property. The fifth is a doctor of the chief-town, popular among his patients of all opinions, and supported by the Reactionaries, who have no candidate of their own. Four of the five are members of the conseil-général, the professor being its vice-president, and the last three call themselves Republican without the qualification of Radical. The senatorial delegates number nearly 900, and almost all are present at the election. At the first ballot the professor and the two doctors obtain about 200 votes apiece, distancing the two lawyers, who are beaten. Before the second ballot a private transaction takes place, as is usual at these elections. The supporters of one of the doctors go over to the professor, who is thus proclaimed senator.¹

The callings of these candidates corroborate what has been said as to the Senate being filled with minor followers of the

¹ In senatorial elections, at the first two ballots a candidate to be elected must receive an absolute majority of the votes present, which must be not less than a quarter of the entire roll of senatorial electors ; but at the third ballot, if one be necessary, a relative majority decides the election (*Loi Organique*, 2 Août 1875, art. 15).

occupations pursued with distinction by members of the Institute of France. One reason for the abundance of that class is that the chief electoral influence in a department is the conseil-général. In the cases where a local deputy is not chosen to fill a senatorial vacancy, the most favoured candidates are usually members of the departmental council, on which professional men abound. They are naturally provincial practitioners, residing in the district which they represent on the council; and thus it comes to pass that the Senate is almost entirely composed of local celebrities, lawyers and doctors predominating.¹

The French lawyers elected to the Senate are, with a few exceptions, elderly men who have lived and practised in the provinces. When they migrate to Paris, they have no more chance of ever holding a brief at the Palace if they are barristers than they have of transferring their offices and their clients to the metropolis if they are notaries. They therefore in a sense represent regional interests, and being usually small proprietors claim to be regarded as representatives of agriculture. This is true also of the country doctors sent to Luxembourg. But both classes, when they come to reside in Paris for nine months of the year, become strangers to bucolic science and to the needs of the provinces. They have likewise to abandon their professional income, which indeed rarely exceeds the senator's salary of 9000 francs; but as living is dear in Paris the change is not lucrative. Thus many a senator, who thrived upon the lawsuits or the ailments of his rural neighbours, finds that, even with the aid of his savings or his wife's dowry, existence is a struggle on a fourth floor in the Latin quarter. For this reason the few are better off who, like the professor in the election just cited, have some

¹ After the triennial senatorial elections in 1897 more than two-thirds of the assembly was composed of lawyers, doctors, professors, and journalists: the lawyers numbering about a hundred and the medical practitioners about forty. Of 240 senators representing the provinces (not including the members for Paris and the colonies, or the surviving "irremovables"), all but a dozen belonged by birth, long residence, or occupation to the departments for which they sat, and nearly 200 of them were actually natives of the departments which elected them. This shows that however unsatisfactory the composition of the Senate may be, it might be worse if it were filled with "carpet-baggers" from the capital.

calling in the capital, as in their case the senatorial stipend is unalloyed profit.

When a senator is a member of the conseil-général of his department, to which fact he very often owes his seat, attendance at its sessions will take him into his constituency at Easter, and at the Assumption; and if he have retained his home in the region he will spend there the summer vacation. Otherwise he will become completely Parisian, but usually a Parisian who has conquered the capital too late in life. There are many of these senators who, unless they were previously deputies, or at an earlier period of life were students of law or medicine, have never lived in Paris. Therefore, migrating thither when ways of thought and habits are stereotyped (for the average age of the senators is sixty-three), they have no other occupation or interest in life than their unagitating duties at the Luxembourg.

A marked defect in the composition of the Senate is the absence of proper representation of the commercial and industrial interests of the country. Of 300 senators only forty are in any way connected with commerce or industry, and to arrive at that small number, bankers on the one hand and retired shopkeepers on the other have to be counted. We shall further examine the rarity of this class in the legislature in dealing with the Lower Chamber. It need only be said here that the employers of labour and the merchants in the commercial and industrial centres of provincial France impress a stranger as being men of practical character and cultivated intelligence peculiarly appropriate to senatorial dignity. It is therefore unfortunate that, in an Assembly where their weight and experience would be of value, their proper places should be filled by a crowd of obscure professional men.

It is easy to see how an Assembly, composed in increasing measure of such elements, is without great authority in the nation. It is not merely power, genius, and eloquence which are wanting; but country lawyers and doctors, who have grown grey within a provincial horizon, have not as a rule adequate experience of men and of affairs to make them shine in a legislative body.

The lawyers have not the fault, imputed to Englishmen of the same class, of speaking from a brief without conviction. Their failing is rather to pose as theoretical jurists ; and the painstaking essays which they deliver from the tribune are perhaps better fitted to stir the applause of a congress of advocates at the seat of a provincial Court of Appeal, than to raise the practical renown of the Senate. Moreover, the term for which senators are elected is nine years. An elderly man who has broken with the associations of his past to come and live in the great centralising city, which has ever absorbed all the strength and feeling of local life, difficult though it be for him to become a Parisian in his declining days, is not likely to struggle to assert himself as the mouthpiece of the communes, when he knows it to be humanly improbable that he will have to account more than once to his constituents. Thus it is that Senators, both those who have come direct from their provinces and those who have passed through the Chamber of Deputies, with its disturbing elections at short intervals, far from burning to check each act of the Lower House, are disposed to regard their own as a restful sanctuary which it is best not to embroil in vain strife with the more ardent branch of the legislature.

This is the impression which a sitting of the Senate gives to an onlooker. Its aspect is no longer that which it bore under the Second Empire, when on great occasions the hall of Marie de Médicis was thronged with an assembly of cardinals in scarlet robes, marshals and admirals in full array, and unofficial senators in gilded uniform. Not that the Senate under the Third Republic has an undignified appearance. Hoary age does not need a laced coat to give it dignity. A clever artist has painted a number of these ancient men, grouped in a noble gallery of the palace, with such skilful fancy that amid the Florentine architecture the dull modern costume goes unperceived, and the grey-beards might belong to the venerable heads of senators of some undefined Republic of the Renaissance.

A sitting of the Senate does not indeed present so romantic a picture. But the impression that it gives is not that of a house

of legislature. The idea sometimes suggested is rather that of a retreat for elderly men of education, whose faculties are undimmed, and whose favourite pastime is to meet in a debating society to recite to one another essays on abstract, legal, or historical questions, with an occasional reference to topics of the hour. The President takes his seat in leisurely fashion and gives a tone to the afternoon's proceedings by pronouncing in admirable language an obituary eulogy on one of their number snatched away since their last meeting; tracing his career from his birth under the First Empire, through the Restoration and the Monarchy of July up to the Second Republic—usually a glorious moment in the lives of departed senators, before Louis Napoleon stifled a genius which would have startled Europe.

If a project of Law Reform be the subject of debate, its official report will be of solid value to the student of jurisprudence or procedure. But if the serious business of the day be an interpellation involving some reference to a hundred years ago, then even the idle listeners in the uncrowded galleries will be rewarded. For these elders know their Revolution; and when the eloquence becomes impassioned as the men of '89 retort upon the men of '93, it is because they are old enough to have imbibed these far-away controversies by oral tradition. M. Jules Simon knew Robespierre's sister, and there are a dozen senators older than he who survive him. Whenever that accomplished patriarch opened his lips in the Senate, whether to illustrate a point in discussion by a personal reminiscence, or to discourse on a social subject, he charmed his hearers with the well-phrased eloquence of generations which had seen Chateaubriand and known Lamartine. The high academical standard of the debates in the Senate has been maintained by the survivors of the system of nomination,—not only old doctrinaires whose sentiments are sympathetic to the auditory, but Reactionaries whose following grows yearly slenderer; such as M. Buffet, the venerable deputy of 1848 who lived till 1898, and M. Chesnelong, the clerical champion of lost causes. Nor are the elected senators

ungifted with eloquence and style. If the debates be carefully studied, though little to enliven be manifest in them, the form of the speeches is often of surprising excellence, considering that the speakers are men unknown to fame, for the most part the country lawyers and doctors whose political careers we have been noting.

It sometimes happens that a discussion in the Upper House is wound up by a Minister who is a Deputy, a young man whom the rapid changes of governments have entrusted with a portfolio. His jaunty volubility, suited to parry loud interruption, is, after the measured arguments of the decorous homilies which he has to sum up or to refute, in contrast more striking than that between the tumult of the bustling traffic which rattles over the Pont de la Concorde past the Palais Bourbon, and the stillness of some of the old streets near the Luxembourg.

As one witnesses the scene, the position and utility of the Upper Chamber in the Third Republic may be conjectured. It has little authority in the country, either from the superiority or the popular prestige of the names on its roll. But while the unimportance of the well-conceived French Senate may be a warning to amateur constitution-menders in other lands, it serves a certain purpose in its own. The young man from the Palais Bourbon and his colleagues may one day be in a hurry; and though the Senate does not resist if the deputies seem to be supported by the country, it gives the Lower Chamber, which is never consistent for twelve consecutive months, time for reflection. This seems to be the true utility of the Senate in the French Constitution. It does very little; it is not highly considered; but the mere existence of a Second Chamber lends a certain solidity to the Constitution, which perhaps without it would not have attained its majority, as no other constitution has in modern France.

CHAPTER II

THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

UNIVERSAL suffrage in France, like other Parliamentary institutions, is not the evolution of gradual reform, as is extension of the franchise in England. Nor is it the work of the great Revolution, which in neither of its phases put it into practice.¹ Nor, again, is extended franchise the result of resistance to oppression; nor has its enjoyment any necessary connection with liberal administration or with liberty of the subject. Two generations after the summoning of the States-General, manhood suffrage was in 1848 suddenly obtained by the nation for the election of its representatives, through the fortuitous circumstance of the Revolution of February, at a moment when the people were less oppressed than at any previous period during the century. The first tangible result of this franchise, which fifty years later England has not, was the popular consecration of the autocracy of the Second Empire.

When, therefore, the National Assembly in 1875 declared in the first article of its Constitutional Law that the Chamber of Deputies should be elected by universal suffrage, it was not

¹ The Constitution of 1791 adopted a system of indirect election, certain limitations being placed on the franchise of the electors both of the first and of the second degree. The Convention in 1793 established only a paper constitution, never put into practice, which laid down the principle of manhood suffrage and, following the humanitarian theories of the hour, extended it to foreigners domiciled in France under certain conditions. Before this franchise was ever exercised, the Constitution of An III. (August 22, 1795) had revived indirect suffrage, tax-paying and military service being the qualifications for electors of the first degree; and this system lasted till Bonaparte took things in hand.

thereby proclaiming a new era. Nor was it defining the regime under which the country was to be administered. That democratic franchise, to which the accidental Republic of 1848 had given birth, had proved a docile instrument in the arbitrary hands of Louis Napoleon ; and the Reactionary majority returned to the Assembly of 1871 was a further proof that its free exercise was not incompatible with the establishment of a monarchy.

I

The registration laws under the Third Republic are based on the organic decree promulgated by Louis Napoleon two months after the Coup d'État.¹ All Frenchmen who have attained the age of twenty-one, and who have not by judicial condemnation lost their civil and political capacity,² have the right to be electors without any fiscal or other qualification. For the enjoyment of the suffrage the only condition required of a man in full possession of his civic rights is that he shall be inscribed on the electoral lists ; and the system of registration is in France so simple and so inexpensive as to compel the admiration and envy of inhabitants of the United Kingdom doomed in perpetuity by the wisdom of their reformers to cumbrous and expensive complexity. When, a generation ago, Mr. Disraeli, with alien perspicacity, taught the English people that wide extension of the franchise was not fraught with revolutionary peril, it might have been hoped that by the end of the century manhood suffrage

¹ Décret organique : 2 Février, 1852.

² The French law of electoral disqualification is severe. For example, a sentence of three months' imprisonment for adulteration of food or the use of false weights carries with it perpetual disqualification, which can never be removed. All the condemnations which a Frenchman incurs are inscribed on his "casier judiciaire," deposited with the tribunal of his native arrondissement, and as soon as a man is arrested in any part of France, on his identity being established, a copy of his casier judiciaire is sent for, on which his new offence is inscribed. If he incur a sentence depriving him of electoral rights, it is reported to his domicile as well as to his birthplace. In large towns there are no doubt instances of disqualified electors getting on the register, but the cases are few, as the penalties are heavy. The most frequent are those of uncertificated bankrupts (*faillies non réhabilités*) whose motive for getting on the register of a new domicile is not that of electoral fraud, but the concealment of their history, which, if known, would destroy their commercial credit.

would be the basis of election both of the House of Commons and of all local administrative bodies. That uniformity can never be realised owing to the granting of the vote to women in municipal and other elections, which perpetuates the possession of property as the basis for electoral suffrage. It thus defers the unencumbered enjoyment by all citizens of an uniform and intelligible franchise to the distant period looked forward to by politicians whose ideals need the genius of Aristophanes or of Swift to do them justice.¹

Without the invention of the feminine voter, it is to be doubted if a franchise admitting of a system of registration so simple would ever commend itself to the British Parliament. Whatever the ulterior benefit of its legislation, it rarely adds a page to the statute-book not of primary advantage to lawyers and other unproductive operatives. It has been stated without challenge in the House of Commons that the registration of votes costs our country £700,000 a year,²—that is to say, more than the Militia forces of the United Kingdom, or the Science and Art Department under the Education Office. Of this portion

¹ "The Franchise and Removal of Women's Disabilities Bill provides that every man and woman of full age, whether married or single, shall be qualified to vote at a parliamentary or local election, who resides in the area for which the election is held and is duly registered, unless disqualified (for a reason other than sex or marriage) by common law or Act of Parliament, and no other person shall be qualified to vote at any such election. No person shall be disqualified by sex or marriage from being elected, or being a member of either House of Parliament, or of a borough or county council, or from exercising any public functions whatever. The date on which the Act is to come into force is not specified" (*Times*, February 20, 1896).

² "The cost of registration to the public for the general register was £350,000 a year. Then, under the Parish Councils Act, there was an entirely distinct charge for registration created of no less than £100,000 a year; therefore, £450,000 a year was spent out of the public rate for registration. There was the expense to political parties—at least £250,000 a year; therefore £700,000 a year was now being spent in registration. Then came the proposal of the Government, which he hoped would be modified, for a double registration. He did not say it would be double the present cost, but it would cost the public nearly £300,000 more, and political parties perhaps another £200,000."—(Mr. S. Storey, House of Commons, May 1, 1894. Second reading of Registration Bill.) I have not taken into consideration the last estimate of the speaker, but only his calculation of the cost of registration at the moment of this speech. The estimates for the same year appropriated £600,000 to the Militia; £692,000 to the Science and Art Department; and £431,000 to the Diplomatic and Consular Services.

of the nation's wealth annually squandered, without increasing the welfare of a single human being, the public purse contributes £450,000, a larger sum than the expenses of our Diplomatic and Consular relations with the entire world.

As the registration of six and a half million electors of Great Britain and Ireland costs their fellow-countrymen at least £700,000 a year, while ten and a half million Frenchmen¹ entitled to the suffrage enter into the enjoyment of it for an imperceptible outlay, it is not without interest to observe the system practised in France, even though we can never hope to imitate it.

The registration of electors in France is conducted by the municipalities. As the entire country is divided into communes, all similarly administered (excepting that of the capital), and as all local governing bodies—departmental, district, and municipal councils—are chosen by the same electorate, the machinery for conferring upon citizens the right to vote is extremely simple. The electoral lists are permanent, subject to an annual revision. In each commune, included entirely in one constituency, a Commission of three inhabitants is annually nominated, composed of the mayor and two delegates, one appointed by the Préfet of the Department and the other by the municipal council. In Paris the Commission in each of the thirty-seven electoral districts is composed of the mayor of the arrondissement, of a municipal councillor of the quarter, and of an elector named by the Préfet of the Seine. A similar plan is pursued at Lyons; but, as no provincial town has more than one mayor, deputy-mayors are delegated for the duty. During the first ten days of each year² the Commission proceeds with the revision of the lists. After

¹ The electorate of the United Kingdom at the general election of 1895 numbered 6,415,469 voters; that of France at the general election of 1898, 10,635,206. In the United Kingdom there are at least half a million duplicate voters, while in France there are none.

² In the autumn a placard is posted on the walls of the towns, of which the following is an example:—"Department of X: Arrondissement of Y: Town of Z. The Mayor of Z hereby gives notice that the electoral revision takes place every year before January 15, and invites all those not yet inscribed on the lists, who fulfil the conditions prescribed by the law, to present themselves at the Mairie without delay to claim their registration, or to notify their change of residence if any have taken place."

erasing the names of persons who have died, who have departed, who have forfeited their electoral rights, or who have been previously inscribed by error, the Commissioners add to the list the names of those inhabitants who, at the end of March, will have become qualified by age¹ and by six months' residence. The maximum space of time during which a French elector can be voteless by reason of change of residence is seventeen months. Votes thus lost are very rare, as the law provides for the two classes in the French population most prone to move. The inhabitants of large towns, divided into a number of electoral areas, who, in quitting one quarter for another, change their constituency without going beyond the municipal boundary, have simply to certify their residence of six months within its limits in order to be put immediately on the register of the division of their new domicile,—Paris, like all other French cities, forming but one commune. Moreover, all public functionaries whose place of residence is obligatory, and who are the most numerous migratory body in France, from members of the clergy and the magistracy to elementary schoolmasters and postmen, have the right to be placed on the register at once.

A new resident in a commune, on his first application to be inscribed as an elector, has to produce proof that he has demanded the removal of his name from the electoral lists of his former residence. If by error an elector's name be left on the list of two constituencies and he vote more than once, he subjects himself to the penalty of two years' imprisonment. Except, however, in constituencies near one another, the rule of holding all the elections on the same day makes plural voting almost impossible. If a man has residences in several communes he is free to choose the one in which he will exercise the suffrage; but the principle of "one man one vote" is so stringently carried out that he cannot be inscribed as an elector for the deputy in one place and in another for the municipal

¹ A resident who comes of age on the last day of the qualifying period has the right to be inscribed as an elector if he have lived in the commune for six months.

council. Hence it happens, notably in the region near Paris, that landowners and residents are sometimes municipal councillors of their rural commune without having a vote there, if they have preferred to claim it in the urban domicile.

The proceedings of the Commissions are very simple, and in no respect resemble those of an English Revision Court. The sittings are not public; neither the deputy, the future candidates, nor the political organisations are represented; but a fortnight after the opening of the revision it is announced by public notice that the revised list has been deposited at the Mairie to be inspected by all comers. No expense is incurred in printing. The new list is written in duplicate, one copy being sent to the Préfet of the Department, and the other retained at the Mairie for inspection for three weeks. During that time any elector of the constituency, whether resident in the commune or not, can notify omissions or undue insertions in the list; and any person whose name is thus objected to is informed by the mayor of the objection and requested to reply to it. After this the Commission of revision is increased by the addition of two delegates of the municipal council;¹ and the five Commissioners constitute a court for adjudicating on all claims and objections. The sittings again are not public, nor are the interested parties represented. They are, however, forthwith notified of the decisions of the Commission, and the proceedings are finished by the middle of February. Any elector in the constituency, whether personally affected or not by the judgment of the Commission, can appeal free of cost to the Juge-de-Paix of the canton. A decision of this magistrate can be further appealed against in the Cour de Cassation, in the rare case of questions arising of misconstruction of the law by the judge, and when a decision is thus quashed the case is sent for trial before another Juge-de-Paix.

It is interesting to mention these judicial safeguards of the

¹ At Paris and Lyons the two extra members of the Commissions, instead of being nominated by the Municipal Council, are co-opted by each Commission from among the electors of the constituency.

suffrage provided by the law ; but as a matter of practice not one in twenty thousand of the decisions of the Commissions is ever disputed, composed though they be of laymen, usually of slender education, and always unaided by legal assessors.

The inexpensiveness of the revision of the electoral register is due in the first place to its being gratuitously performed by private citizens without the intervention of lawyers, of electioneering agents, and of other fee-seeking experts. In the second place a great economy is effected by the practice of having the list written and not printed. It is difficult for British politicians to imagine an election being fought, or an electoral organisation prepared, without the aid of "a marked register" ; but candidates in France do not perceive the need for that costly engine. The commune is so entirely the base of civic life, that a written list deposited in each Mairie, at the disposal of every one who wishes to peruse or to copy it, suffices for all purposes. It is thus published in a manner fully as effective as it would be by the exposure of printed matter at church-doors, or by the faculty of purchasing unwieldy catalogues of the male adult population of the region. That the lack of printed registers causes no inconvenience is shown by the facility with which the voting papers are distributed to the electorate by the candidates, who, to effectually carry out that practice, are compelled to know the names and addresses of all the voters. The communal system, combined with the uniformity of franchise, so simplifies the machinery of French civic life, that the agents of the candidates in the communes have no difficulty in providing a complete list of electors.

How inexpensive the registration is may be judged from the fact that even in great cities like Lyons no outlay is set down in the municipal budget for the preparation of the lists. The cost is so infinitesimal that it is included in incidental office-expenses ; and although the lists are written, the entire work of their preparation is performed by the ordinary clerical staff of the municipality. In the vast majority of French communes that staff consists of one person, the secretary of the Mairie, who is the village schoolmaster ; and the drawing up of the lists is

simply part of his unaided routine duty. If the registration of the voters of France were to fall into abeyance for a year or two the budgets of the communes for salaries and printing would undergo no decrease; and a saving of public money would be effected only in the diminished quantity of paper and ink consumed in the writing of the lists.

A criticism applied to the system is that it puts uncontrolled power into the hands of the mayors and the active politicians of the municipal councils. The mayors, though no longer nominated by the central Government, are Republican in a large majority of the communes. Hence it frequently happens that the commissioner appointed by the Government is practically as much the nominee of the mayor¹ and of the council as is the third commissioner, who is the delegate of the municipality. Thus the first revision of the lists may be left entirely to the political group, of which the mayor is the leading spirit; and the two delegates added by the municipal council for the final revision would naturally belong to the same coterie.

The disadvantage of the system was illustrated by the Toulouse case, brought to trial in 1894. The Radical-Socialist party in the ancient capital of Languedoc desired to gain the ascendancy in the town council, for the purpose, it was alleged, of getting possession of the patronage to the municipal offices, which are numerous in a large city. As the register is identical for the elections of councillors and of deputies, its manipulation also affected the parliamentary contest. In the course of judicial proceedings it was discovered that the electoral lists which had served for the general elections of 1893 contained 3000 names of fictitious persons. The confession of certain clerks employed at the Hôtel de Ville divulged how this falsification was effected. Wholesale additions were made to the

¹ The usual practice is for the Préfet or the Sous-Préfet to ask the mayor (who is his representative in the commune) to name the delegate of the Government, and he generally chooses a municipal councillor. In cases where the municipal council is not in favour at the prefecture (if, for example, its majority is Reactionary), then the Préfet or Sous-Préfet gets some functionary in the canton, such as the Juge-de-Paix or the Brigadier of the Gendarmerie, to name the commissioner.

lists, of the names of persons who were dead, were bankrupt, or who had left Toulouse; and, with the aid of chemicals, names were removed of voters opposed to the Radical-Socialists. As a duplicate register at various stages of its completion is deposited at the prefecture, it was necessary to abstract it. Complicity therefore was essential between the agents of the central authority and those of the municipality. The Government, by presidential decree,¹ removed the Préfet of the Haute Garonne to another department, thus showing that his conduct was not above suspicion. It also dissolved the town council, as the frauds had been perpetrated primarily for the quadrennial municipal elections of 1892; but as the parliamentary election of 1893, which was conducted on a register still packed with fictitious names, had been validated by the Chamber, there was no possibility of inquiring if the deputies owed their seats to the frauds. The method of using the falsified lists on polling day will be more conveniently noticed when we consider the general subject of Electoral Corruption. We shall then see that this affair of the falsification of the register resembles all corrupt electoral practices in France in that it could not have been successfully performed without the complicity of functionaries.

As to the Toulouse scandals being the result of the French system, no doubt a printed register, publicly exposed, would be more difficult to mutilate than written lists; and if the revision were conducted by paid magistrates, as has been proposed,² less scope would be given for the enterprise of partisan town councillors. But even if there were twenty municipalities in France as corrupt as that of Toulouse, it would not be worth while to establish a costly system of registration to check frauds, the facility of which is now chiefly due to public indifference. Half a dozen vigilant electors could have exposed the frauds at

¹ September 22, 1894.

² *e.g.* the bill introduced in 1895 by M. Louis Passy, deputy of the Eure, after the scandals of Toulouse, which provided that the final commission of revision should be cantonal instead of communal (the canton being the administrative area intermediate to the commune and the arrondissement), and should consist of the Juge-de-Paix and two persons nominated by the Civil Tribunal of the arrondissement.

Toulouse before the perpetrators had time to utilise them. Moreover, if it be true, as French critics say, that the fraudulent spirit exists in other districts, it would be difficult in all but a few populous places for the most audacious political band to attempt to falsify the lists, as the sparseness of the population of the area for registration would render detection inevitable. Toulouse, though its population is barely 150,000, is the sixth city of France. In the entire country there are only about fifty communes with a population of over 30,000; while of all the 36,000 communes, 28,000 have a population of less than 1000. Thus the detection of either fraud or error in the lists of electors is within the competence of any inhabitant who is disposed to give ten minutes to the task.

II

The political indifference of the French electorate is such that it is marvellous that scandals like that of Toulouse are not more frequent. Even there, in spite of the addition to the lists of 3000 non-electors, who doubtless all went to the poll, nearly a third of the persons on the register refrained from voting. It is a significant fact that in the regions where the elections cause the greatest excitement, giving the impression that the entire population is interested in them, the abstentions are most numerous. The most turbulent election of 1893 was that of the Var, when M. Clemenceau lost his seat at Draguignan. But though, to assure his defeat, the forces of the boulevards were transported to Provence, the department, which for a week was the talk of Europe, entered so tepidly into the fray, that only one-half of its voters went to the poll; and in the same department at Toulon, the deputy elected received only a fifth of the votes on the register. The neighbouring Bouches-du-Rhône is politically the most conspicuous of provincial electorates, yet the attraction of 74 candidates for eight seats brought to the urns little more than half of its electors. In its capital Marseilles, whose boast it is that on the Cannebière take birth the revolutions which

convulse France, barely a quarter of the voters in certain divisions took the trouble to attest their progressive faith.¹

Bordeaux is a city of less exuberant manners, but it has continued its political prominence, which was its tradition even before the days of the Girondins. It was the last stronghold of Boulangism, and the final stand of that party made the general election of 1893 of rare interest. Yet in the three urban divisions Republicans and Monarchists, Socialists and Boulangists, could not bring to the polls 55 per cent of the electors. This occurred again in 1896, when the moderate Republicans, who boasted that they were forming a new national party of order, sent to Bordeaux a retired ambassador to contest a seat. The prosperous and the industrious classes so little heeded the proffered honour that they let a Socialist win by the votes of little more than a quarter of the electors on a register of twenty thousand. The Bordelais, who in all classes unite to their commercial genius a fine taste for the amenities of life, hold that six laborious days, spent in increasing the national prosperity and their own, call for a Sabbath of unalloyed recreation. So, after saying their prayers, on a summer's morning before the sun is high, they are already speeding to the valleys of the Dordogne, or sailing down the Garonne towards the ocean, past the vineyards of the Médoc which give them wealth. In deference to this popular practice the authorities at Bordeaux sometimes open the poll at 6 o'clock,² but without conspicuous result.

The hard-working classes, both here and elsewhere, have often for politics a disregard akin to contempt. Why should they risk

¹ Marseilles maintains its tradition of procuring its prominence by the voices of but a small proportion of its citizens. M. Taine, in showing how the devolution of political power to the people in 1789-90 in reality meant the surrender of the government to the violent minority, says that the election of the Mayor of Marseilles in 1790, when the city was already in insurrection, was accomplished by the votes of one-eighth of the citizens authorised to vote under the new law (*Revolution*, livre iii. c. 1). The elections of 1898 reproduced what happened in 1893. The deputies returned by the Bouches-du-Rhône represented a smaller proportion of electors than in any departments, excepting the Gironde, the Var, and Lot-et-Garonne.

² The usual polling hours are from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., but the Préfet, on the representation of a mayor, can order the opening of the poll in any commune at any hour after 5 A.M. The hour of closing cannot be modified.

the missing of a boat or a train, and sacrifice the holiday joy of a whole family for the sake of sending to divert himself in Paris an Opportunist, or a Socialist, or a Reactionary politician? The persistent refusal of a large proportion of the citizens to use their electoral privilege saddens the souls of legislators, who like to be thought the chosen of the manhood of the nation. So they have discerned that it is the month of August which is fatal to electoral zeal. The gastralgic are at the waters; the well-to-do are at the sea; the autumn manœuvres, the children's vacations, the ending harvest and the coming vintage, all combine to distract the voter from his civic duties; so a less supine season has been decreed for future general elections while the Republic lasts.¹ More vigorous methods are also proposed for replenishing the neglected urns. One project laid before Parliament for making the vote compulsory provided that the bad citizen who failed to poll should have his name placarded in the constituency; if this infamy did not bring repentance he should be fined; and if he still remained obstinate, the Bastille being demolished and transportation to Cayenne expensive, he should be condemned eternally never to vote again as the extreme penalty for never having voted hitherto.²

Montesquieu, whose acquaintance with democratic government was theoretical, said that the tyranny of a prince is not more ruinous for a state than public indifference to the common weal in a republic; but my personal impression is that the political indifference of the French electors, as displayed in their abstention from the vote, is of salutary effect in France. It would be too much to say that the three millions of electors on the

¹ Loi du 20 Juillet 1893. At the elections of 1898, which under the new law were held in May, the proportion of abstentions was slightly smaller, the Radical-Socialists having polled in greater numbers.

² Proposition Letellier: June 1893. M. Bardoux had previously, in 1880, drafted a similar project of law, which the Chamber never took into consideration. In 1881 there was the case of an entire commune, containing 103 electors, abstaining from the vote, and an attempt was made consequently to annul the election; but the bureau of the Chamber held that if this were done it might suggest an easy method of making void elections. M. Viette, the Minister of Public Works in August 1893, in order to remove temptation from lukewarm politicians, who preferred a holiday to the performance of their civic duties, suppressed the Sunday excursion trains on the polling day.

register who fail to record their votes at the elections include all that is best and worthiest in the nation, but the proposition would not be extravagant. Those who abstain are not only men eminent in letters and art, of ill example perhaps in their disdain for politics ; not rare philosophers like M. Taine, who, attaining manhood at the epoch when universal suffrage was granted and uncertain how to bestow his vote, spent the rest of his life without reaching a definite conclusion.¹ In a democracy such fastidious units, however eminent, count for little. Their abstention becomes important when it is joined to that of humbler workers in every sphere of life, in every region of the land. Explore the French departments ; live among the people and observe the most industrious villager or the most cultivated tradesman in the country town ; question him about the local deputy or the elections, and his reply will be, "Je ne m'occupe pas de politique"—a peasant may use a more vigorous verb. It might be thought that the wholesale abstention from the polls of hard-working, self-denying, and often highly civilised members of a society whose political representation sorely needs sanitation is an evident evil. It would be so in a community which had adopted with the parliamentary system its necessary corollary, the party system ; but as things are in France it is perhaps for the public good that so large a proportion of the population voluntarily refrains from politics. Doubtless if the three million abstainers² were organised into one party they could control the Chamber ; but the only result of driving them to the poll would be to scatter their votes among the candidates representing existing groups.

It is not as though French parliamentary elections turned on great questions interesting every citizen of intelligence. As a rule, they present no question whatever to the electorate. The only

¹ *L'Ancien Régime*, Préface.

² It is futile to attempt to institute a comparison between the proportion of abstentions in France and in the United Kingdom, as not only does the suffrage differ in the two countries, but in the United Kingdom no poll is held for uncontested elections. The recruits doing their military service account for a certain number of abstentions ; but as the army of France is one of its most admirable institutions, this fact adds to the truth of the observation that the abstentions include the best elements in the nation.

real exception to that rule was in 1877, when the country had practically to decide for or against the Republican form of government. But even then, when the proportion of voters reached its maximum under the Republic, the poll fell short of the plebiscite of 1851, which consecrated the Coup d'État, though the registered voters were more numerous. It only approached it because of the quasi-plebiscitary character of the elections of 1877, which were worked by a power absolutely necessary to move the French people—the name of a man: for the verdict of the nation after the Seize Mai was to some extent the personal triumph of Gambetta. In 1885 the unpopularity of M. Jules Ferry stimulated the Reactionaries, and in 1889 the cult for General Boulanger, though waning, was not quite spent. In those two years the abstentions were therefore fewer than in 1881, when Gambetta had become the object of Republican jealousies, or in 1893 and in 1898, when there was not even the shadow of a name for the populace to follow, and for that matter neither policy nor party to rally them. In France the standard of political morality is immeasurably lower than that observed in other matters by the vast majority of the nation, which is orderly, self-denying, honest, and frugal. It is clear therefore that industrious fathers of families, who take to exercising the franchise under these conditions, run the risk of sacrificing to no purpose some of their virtues, the practice of which is the truest patriotism, and the widespread existence, the secret of the stability of France. To devote an hour of a Sunday once in four years to depositing a ballot paper at the Mairie could not in itself demoralise a sober-minded citizen. Yet if by its omission he avoids the danger of becoming a politician, of reading violent political journals, of neglecting his shop or his fields for the facund joys of the café, his abstention is a contribution to the resources of France and to that reserve of good sense and diligence which alone has prevented the follies of its rulers from down-hauling it from the topmost rank of nations.

The first time that the truth of this was impressed upon me was some years ago in a southern town, where, to the café on the glaring Place de la République, the doctor and other notables of

the municipal council had come to refresh themselves over the Parisian papers distributed that morning. The Boulangist epoch was not ended, and the *Intransigeant*, the *Autorité*, the *Bataille*, and the *Cocarde* were then the most potent organs to instil the gospel of the boulevards into provincial understandings. The claims of two candidates for a possible parliamentary vacancy were being submitted to a traveller in the produce of Rouen, affably judicial as befitted one for whom neither capital nor provinces had secrets. The case was delicate. Both rivals were free-thinkers of eminence and members of the same Masonic Lodge. The one a veterinary surgeon, being a man of science, was a disciple of Paul Bert and shared the Opportunist hostility for the plebiscitary General. The other, hitherto a Radical, having been for ten days a Sous-Préfet under the Commune in 1871, had accepted the later Boulangist doctrine even to soliciting the aid of the clericals.¹ Loud roared those sons of the South as each quoted from his favourite journal epithets unknown to the French Academy, reflecting on the morals of M. Constans and other statesmen, and moist grew the brow of the Parisian from Normandy as he aided the local patriots to settle the destinies of France.

The heat of the debate was rivalled outside by the torrid noon-day sun blazing on the white houses of the Avenue Gambetta, deserted at this hour, whither my way took me to a modest habitation. There, in a cool apartment into which softened rays of light filtered through the shutters, the atmospheric change from the burning street without was as striking as the moral contrast of the calm of the people sitting there with the fiery uproar of the gesticulating politicians. It was the home and workshop of a wood-carver, whose skill, famed through the region, had long ago dispensed him of the need for manual toil which he loved with the zeal of a craftsman of old. This simple provincial family

¹ M. Delahaye, a clerical ex-deputy of the Boulangist party, years later (April 2, 1896) recorded in the *Libre Parole* how for two years M. Rochefort refrained from printing in the *Intransigeant* "histoires de curé" in honour of the alliance between the Church and Boulangism. The *Libre Parole* did not come into existence till after the death of General Boulanger.

composed a characteristic French group, the head of it grown grey in intelligent labour ; his wife vigorous and orderly, keeping his books as well as the house ; his daughter, as comely as her mother had been before the War, lately married to a young cultivator of the neighbourhood, also present, who had completed his military service. This roomful of contented people contained the materials that promote the prosperity and real glory of France—industry, thrift, family sentiment, artistic instinct, cultivation of the soil, cheerful performance of patriotic duty, and collaboration of woman in the plan of life—all impregnated with an air of the old Latin civilisation, oftener manifest in humble spheres than in the class which ought longest to have preserved it. Wishing to learn something of the political tendencies of the district, I asked about the rumoured retirement of the deputy ; but my inquiry only elicited the phrase often and often repeated to me since then, “*Je ne m’occupe pas de politique, Monsieur.*” When the old man said this there was no anger nor scorn in his tone, such as a reference to the Government of France called forth from the occupants of the neighbouring château which I had left that morning. The members of this worthy family had no ill-will for the Republic, nor indeed for any regime which allowed them to pursue their callings tranquilly ; but politics were not to them an occupation for steady and industrious people.

III

In spite of the indifference of the electorate there is a disposition to equalise the value of the vote, as though it were a prized privilege. “One vote one value” is in our country sometimes declared to be the corollary of “one man one vote” ; but the working of the French system shows that the latter is easier to ensure than the former. The electoral area in France is the *arrondissement*, or administrative subdivision of the department. Each district returns one deputy, excepting those of a population exceeding 100,000, which are divided into two single-member constituencies, or into three if the population

exceed 200,000, and so on. After each quinquennial census, if an *arrondissement* returning one member be found to contain over 100,000 inhabitants, it is divided into two constituencies; or if an *arrondissement*, hitherto divided into two, has no longer that population, one of its members is taken away. Thus the *arrondissement* of Carcassonne at the election of 1889 had a population just exceeding 100,000, and was divided into two constituencies, each returning a deputy. But at the census of 1891 the population had dropped to 99,418, so the entire *arrondissement* became one constituency returning one member. This is a good example of the difficulty of devising a scheme for equalising the value of votes; as it is clear that at the elections of 1893 each vote in this division of the Aude had but one-half the value attached to it in 1889, the reduction of the population being so slight. Moreover, as the readjustment of electoral areas is made on the basis of population, the case might occur of the population falling below the 100,000 limit, and thus reducing the representation of the *arrondissement*, while the electorate actually increased. The removal of an industry employing several hundred women, children, or foreigners might have such a result. Again, the proportion of electors to the population differs extraordinarily in different regions in France, ranging from thirty-four for every hundred inhabitants in the Gers and in Tarn-et-Garonne, to twenty-two and twenty in the Rhône and in the Seine.¹ Also it must be borne in mind that the readjustment only takes place within the limits of an *arrondissement*, each one, however small, having its separate representation. Thus the Basses Alpes, with 124,000 inhabitants, has five deputies, while the Haute-Marne, with 243,000, or nearly double that population, has only three, simply

¹ It is interesting to notice that after the lapse of over thirty years the various departments retain almost the identical relative proportions of electorate to population, in 1863, under the Empire, Tarn-et-Garonne heading the list, and the Seine coming last, as in 1898. The chief factor to make the proportion small is the presence of large numbers of foreigners in a department; after that comes the fecundity of the inhabitants of a region, as children are non-electors. Thus the departments of Brittany which are prolific have, owing to the influence of the Church, always had a relatively small proportion. The alarming decrease in the number of births in France has increased the total proportion of electors to population, until it is now about twenty-seven per hundred.

because the former of these departments is divided for administrative purposes into five *arrondissements* and the latter into three. Even within departments the disproportion is very great. In the Basses Alpes the *arrondissement* of Digne has a population of 43,000, so there a vote has not a third of the value of a vote in the adjacent *arrondissement* of Barcelonnette, where there are but 14,000 inhabitants, and where each suffrage has seven times the value of one recorded at Carcassonne. In Tarn-et-Garonne, at Montauban, a defeated candidate in 1893 received 11,600 votes, while in the Hautes Alpes, M. Flourens, a former Foreign Minister, was returned with 2900 votes, that being an absolute majority of the entire electorate of Embrun.

This shows how chimerical is the idea of procuring the same value for each vote in parliamentary elections. In France, where there is every disposition to equalise it, it could only be effected under *scrutin-d'arrondissement* by a complete reconstruction of the administrative divisions of the country, as the confusion of areas, which we English delight in, could never be grafted on the symmetrical French system. In the British Islands, no doubt, the existing chaos would not be made much worse if the whole kingdom were mapped out into electoral districts of equal population; but as the population, unlike that of France, increases rapidly in many regions, the expense of perpetual boundary commissions might stay the zeal of reformers.

In France, the only method possible under the system of single-member constituencies for making the value of votes approximately equal, would be to divide the departments into areas containing about 14,000 inhabitants, the population of the smallest *arrondissements*; but that would involve a Chamber of at least 2500 deputies, or more than double the number of the members of the States-General in 1789. It may here be mentioned that since Louis XVI. summoned the Estates of the Realm the number of members of the legislature has not regularly followed either the population or the electorate of the country. The Chamber of Deputies, under the restricted franchise of the Monarchy of July, had nearly 200 more members than the Corps

Législatif of the Second Empire under universal suffrage. The National Assembly of 1871 was less numerous than the Convention of 1792, and much less numerous than the Constituent Assembly of 1848, which had more members than the combined Senate and Chamber of the Third Republic.¹

IV

No nomination, or similar formality, is needed as preliminary to a parliamentary candidature. All that the law requires of a candidate is that five days before the election he shall lodge at the prefecture of the department in which it is to take place a declaration, witnessed by a mayor, of the name of the constituency for which he intends to stand. Even this slight formality was only established in 1889 by the law prohibiting multiple candidatures, passed to prevent General Boulanger being returned by constituencies all over France. Old doctrinaire Radicals, enemies though they be of plebiscitary manifestations, consider the remedy worse than the evil it was aimed against. The mere recognition of candidates for Parliament is, they argue, the negation of the sovereignty of the people. In their opinion the law should have cognisance of no class other than electors and elected; it being a mark of sovereignty that the people should choose for representatives whom it pleases, whether candidates or not.² If this theory be sound, numbers of ardent Republicans are in heresy to the doctrine of the Revolution, as the occupation of candidate is a favourite profession of multitudes of citizens.³ In 1893 in the

¹ The numbers of the Chamber under the Republic have increased with the population from 533 in 1877 to 581 in 1898. At the end of the Second Empire there were 290 deputies, and under the Monarchy of July 460. There were 1145 members of the States-General, 778 of the Convention of 1792, and 900 of the Constituent Assembly of 1848.

² "Cincinnatus is at his plough, and I am not allowed to approach him; his candidature not having been registered here, or being registered in some other place where he will not be elected, I must resign myself to doing without Cincinnatus." This was the lament of M. Henri Maret, but it may be doubted if a veteran enemy of dictatorship was happy in thus evoking the memory of a Roman dictator.

³ M. Jules Claretie, the Academician, relates that one of this class said to him, "Oui, je suis de nouveau candidat: c'est un métier comme un autre; mais il

Seine for 45 seats there were 333 candidates nearly all Republicans, and there were provincial departments where the proportion was greater.

If the multiple candidatures of Gambetta had been prohibited by the law in the early days of the Republic, its existence might have been terminated, it having been strengthened at a critical moment by his election in 1876 by four great cities. It is, however, quite possible that had Gambetta lived the law might have been passed for his benefit long before the rising of the more meteoric star of Boulanger—so jealously fearful are politicians of the ever-ready impulse of the French population to acclaim a master who would put them down from their seats.

It was likewise the fear of General Boulanger which caused *scrutin-d'arrondissement* to be revived in 1889, and *scrutin-de-liste* to be discarded after a short trial. We have seen that the former is merely election by single-member constituencies. Each administrative *arrondissement* in the departments and each municipal *arrondissement* in Paris chooses one deputy, additional representation being bestowed, in the manner described, in the case of *arrondissements* of over 100,000 inhabitants. Under *scrutin-de-liste* the department is the electoral unit, each having its complement of deputies allotted to it in proportion to its population, and each elector having as many votes as there are seats ascribed to his department, without, however, the power to cumulate. A familiar example of *scrutin-de-liste* in our country was that of the election of the four members of the City of London up to 1867.

It is useless to examine the theoretical arguments adduced in favour of each of the two systems, as the history of the Third Republic shows that each has been taken up and discarded for reasons of expediency rather than of doctrine. Gambetta clamoured in vain for *scrutin-de-liste*; but the Republicans, whose jealousy foresaw it hailing him a dictator, refused to try it

y a trop de morte saison,"—elections in France being quadrennial, and a perpetual candidate both for the legislature and for the local governing bodies not having the opportunity to stand more than three times in four years.

till he was dead, and the men who made it law in 1885 were among the keenest to abrogate it in 1889. Gambetta and his followers predicted that it would produce a race of legislators apt to treat great questions with statesman-like grasp, unlike the delegates of the single-member divisions, fit only to protect local interests and imbued with the "esprit de clocher." Whether the spirit which hovers around village steeples is less desirable than that which is generated in the Palais Bourbon need not be discussed. It was not, however, observed that the Chamber elected by scrutin-de-liste in 1885 manifested breadth of view or other virtues wanting in assemblies chosen under the rival system. Indeed the most conspicuous achievement of the elect of scrutin-de-liste was to restore in a moment of panic scrutin-d'arrondissement. Whatever the theoretical beauties of the former, there is no doubt that under parliamentary government, when the plebiscitary spirit is abroad, it is a more formidable instrument in the hands of a would-be dictator than the system of single-member divisions. Under the latter, even if multiple candidatures be permitted, the return of a popular hero by electorates in every region of the land is only a manifestation which, without revolution, can have no immediate consequence. The idol thus acclaimed can sit for but one constituency, and the others have to make a second choice among his minor adherents; whereas under scrutin-de-liste the result is more striking and of immediate constitutional effect.

This was clearly seen in the apprehensions of M. Floquet's Ministry when it restored scrutin-d'arrondissement in February 1889. The success of General Boulanger at a series of bye-elections in departments, industrial and rural, had been followed by his return for Paris, when he polled nearly a quarter of a million votes, and 80,000 more than his opponent, the nominee of all the Republican groups. This portended that at the general elections the Boulangists would sweep entire regions. It would not have been merely the election of the General in a quarter of Paris, at Lille, at La Rochelle, and at Amiens. It would have been the return of the Boulangist list of 42 deputies for the

Seine, of 21 for the Nord, and so on, in whatever departments his name was acclaimed, who would have filled the Chamber with a vast majority at a dictator's orders. Consequently, M. Constans having succeeded M. Floquet at the Ministry of the Interior, the elections of September 1889 were skilfully conducted under scrutin-d'arrondissement by the very politician who, five years before, had persuaded the Chamber that "scrutin-de-liste is not only the logical organ of the sovereignty of the nation, but also the essential condition of government in a parliamentary Republic."¹

If the principle of "one vote one value" be sound, scrutin-de-liste is advantageous in that it lessens the disproportion inherent in the other system. By the law of 1885, the number of deputies allotted to each department was in the proportion of one to every 70,000 or fraction of 70,000 inhabitants. But while inequalities were thus removed, the utter indifference of the electorate on the question was shown by the lack of emotion displayed when they were restored. We have seen how, under scrutin-d'arrondissement, the department of the Basses Alpes returns five deputies, while the Haute-Marne, with double its population, returns only three. Under scrutin-de-liste, the representation of the Basses Alpes was reduced to three, and that of the Haute-Marne increased to four—a redistribution on a principle easy to understand. But when Boulangism scared back the Chamber into the single-member system, the old inequalities were revived without perceptible protest from the departments bereft of representation—a third of the whole number scattered all over the land. The fact displays the peculiar appreciation which the French have of representative government. It is easy to conceive the uproar which would be roused in a country where parliamentarism is a tradition, were such a measure of retrograde redistribution passed

¹ "Rapport fait au nom de la commission chargée d'examiner la proposition de loi de M. Constans, ayant pour objet de modifier la loi électorale; par M. Constans, député, 29 Déc. 1884." Since the Revolution scrutin-d'arrondissement has been enacted by the law in 1792, 1820, 1831, 1852, 1875, and 1889; scrutin-de-liste in 1795, 1799, 1801, 1817, 1848, 1871, and 1885. Scrutin-de-liste is still in use for municipal elections in communes which are not large enough to be divided into wards.

even in tranquil times ; yet it was accepted with quiet indifference in France on the seeming brink of revolution.¹

V

The operation of the ballot in France is as simple and inexpensive as is that of registration. The French are wont to praise the practical spirit of the English, lamenting that they are the slaves of routine and of formula. In the preliminaries and conduct of elections for the Chamber or for local governing bodies, they have no need to deplore British superiority. No doubt the French administrative machine provides a ready-made and symmetrical frame-work for electoral proceedings ; but if, as in our country, the idea prevailed that the exercise of the suffrage was, in its essence, a complicated action not to be consummated without costly and useless accessories, it would not be difficult to add them.

The issue to the voters of "*cartes électorales*," which is not required by the law, is an example of a practice adopted for its utility, while of little cost. Before each election—legislative, departmental, or municipal—in each commune (or electoral division of Paris and the great towns) a paper or card is prepared for every elector in the area. The name of the department, the nature of the election, its date, and the hours of polling are printed on it. In writing are added the name of the commune or electoral division, the elector's name, his number on the register, and the designation of the polling-place, together with the seal and signature of the mayor. In Paris and other cities somewhat fuller details are added for the purpose of identifying the elector. He has to sign his card when he goes to his *Mairie* to get it, as in populous places he is required at the moment of voting to inscribe his signature on the register, to be compared with that on the card. Five-sixths of the communes of France

¹ Apart from the indifference of the majority of the population regarding parliamentary representation, active local politicians prefer to have a single member returned by their own district, and so more accessible to solicitation, to being merged in the department, even though the total departmental representation be reduced under the former system ; for, as we shall presently see, the chief function of a deputy in his constituency is that of a dispenser of patronage.

are so small that all the inhabitants are known to one another. In them, therefore, precautions for identification are not necessary, and the cards are usually delivered at the houses of the voters by the Garde Champêtre or other agent of the municipal council. The entire cost is so trifling, including distribution, filling up by the municipal secretary, and printing, which is done wholesale at the chief-town of the department, that in the budget of the humblest commune it is entered under miscellaneous expenditure.

The polling, as a rule, takes place in the Mairie. When there is more than one electoral division in a commune, elementary schools are also used; but the great bulk of the electorate of France records its vote in the 36,000 mairies, rural and urban. There is no more preparation made for the taking of the poll than there is for any ordinary municipal function within those walls, from a meeting of the Council to a marriage. There is no erection of carpentry to screen the manipulation of the ballot paper; no array of paid clerks to receive it; the accessories paid for in our country under the heading of returning-officer's expenses are entirely wanting. The provincial council-chamber retains its everyday appearance, except that on the table is a rude and spacious wooden box, its lid pierced with a slit, manifestly of indigenous make. At the close of the election money will not be extorted from the candidates for the hire of this homely utensil. It is an article of municipal furniture, like the bust of the Republic on the mantelpiece, and the bookcase opposite containing the bound statutes, without which no Mairie is complete.¹

Law and custom prescribe that when two or three Frenchmen are gathered together for a public purpose they shall form a "bureau" before proceeding to business. This formality sometimes causes a little delay in the opening of the poll. The bureau of an electoral college consists of a president, four assessors, and a secretary. The president is usually the Mayor, and the law

¹ In Paris and the suburbs, where special accommodation has to be prepared for taking the vote, some of the polling-places have to be fitted with temporary furniture, but this is effected at very little cost, as the prefecture of the Seine, which pays the bill, invites tenders for providing it. In Paris the machinery of elections, like every other commodity, is more expensive than in the provinces, urban or rural.

directs that the assessors shall be members of the municipal council, or in their default the two oldest and the two youngest electors present. Where party spirit is high there is keen competition to serve on the bureau; but quite as often it is difficult to capture the quartette of electors to take the first turn, for on a fine Sunday it is not always easy to assure relays of devoted citizens for the duty. The assessors make no declaration, but take their seats without ceremony. By the time they are ready, the room is filling with the earliest voters—the curé, who has run in between his two masses, the postman who happens to be delivering a letter at the Mairie, or a group of peasant-farmers in clean blouses, anxious to catch a train, who firmly decline to come back in time to take a turn at the bureau.

Before the first vote is recorded the Mayor opens the ballot-box and invites all present to examine it, to see that it is empty and is not constructed with a false bottom. It is then locked with two locks, each requiring a different key, one of which the Mayor retains, the other being handed to an assessor. If the latter during the day should repair to the chase, or otherwise absent himself, without recollecting to hand the key to a colleague who remains on the spot, delay may be caused in the counting of the votes. For the most ardent of local patriots rarely consent to give the entire day to the service of the State, and the Mayor himself resigns his chair to a substitute for a prolonged interval when the hour of the noonday meal approaches. In communes where the number of electors is small,—and there are nearly ten thousand which have an electorate of less than eighty,—if the bureau come to the conclusion that every man available is polled it puts an end to the proceedings after a brief session.

The electors have to bring their own ballot papers. They are usually supplied by the candidates, but the law knows nothing of their origin. It is the practice to distribute them at the houses of electors in the form of leaflets on which is printed the candidate's name, and at the entrance to the polling-places a further distribution of them is made for the benefit of voters who have forgotten them. But there is nothing to prevent an elector from

taking one from an agent of a candidate and using it to vote for a rival by crossing out the printed name and substituting another in writing ; as the name of the candidate voted for may be printed, or written in ink or in pencil, of any colour, provided the writing be legible.¹ If a voter sign his paper the vote is lost to the candidate named on it ; but it is counted in the total of votes recorded, for the purpose of calculating the absolute majority. There is no legal restriction as to the size or shape of the ballot papers, but they must be of plain white paper, so that when folded up they are all of identical appearance, and even the striped letter-paper in common usage in France is not accepted.

From this it will be gathered that while the law protects the elector who wishes to guard the secret of his vote, it is quite competent for him openly to display it to every one, excepting to the president of the bureau. To that official he must present it, to be deposited in the box, folded in such a way as to conceal the name written or printed on it. The elector is forbidden to write on his ballot paper within the polling-room, so his vote cannot be supervised up to the moment of its being given ; but an illiterate voter, as indeed any other, can have his paper filled up by another person, provided it be done outside the ballot-chamber, which faculty is implied by the use of printed voting-papers. The rigour of the precautions prescribed in our country to ensure the secrecy of the ballot suggests the zeal which characterises tardy conversions. Secret voting is coeval in France with the suffrage, so that when the ballot-box was imported to England three generations had used it in France. But in

¹ In scrutin-de-liste, which is in use for municipal elections, it is very rare for an elector to write out a list of his own on a blank sheet. If the composition of none of the printed lists supplied satisfy him he takes one of them and crosses out the names he objects to, and adds others of those whom he wishes to vote for, taking care that there shall not be more names on his list than there are candidates to be elected. If the names on a voting paper be too many, those nearest the bottom of the paper, whether written or printed, are not counted. As a matter of practice in scrutin-de-liste the majority of voters hand in printed lists without making any alteration, which accounts for entire party lists being carried, both in municipal elections now and in legislative elections in 1885 ; for to fold up a paper without making any change in it is the easiest course. If the system were followed of affixing crosses to names printed on ballot papers it is obvious that the results would be less uniform.

England the franchise was the growth of centuries, and in its exercise was attended with malpractices increased by its extension and encouraged by the open system of voting. French society since the Revolution has been so dissimilarly constituted to English, that possibly the particular forms of electoral corruption, to oppose which our legislators established the ballot, would never have flourished in France even with open voting. No doubt corrupt practices had become so flagrant in the United Kingdom as to justify a rigorous Ballot Act. Nevertheless our precautions, which seem excessive when compared with French practice, must in some measure be ascribed to the conviction held by English law-makers of all parties that the exercise of the franchise ought to be an intricate proceeding.

As each elector comes up to the ballot-box, before presenting his voting paper to the president he hands his "carte électorale" to one of the assessors, who reads out the name inscribed on it for the municipal secretary to check on the list of electors before him. The president then puts the paper in the urn, and the assessor cuts off a corner of the card, for a double purpose:—to prevent its being used again (as it has to be given back to the elector in case of a second ballot being necessary), and to check the number of voting papers when they are counted—the cut-off corners of the cards being pierced and carefully strung together on thread.

The counting of the votes is public. The "bureau" first counts the papers to see if the numbers agree with those of the names marked off on the electoral list, and of the fragments of card. It then chooses additional scrutineers from among the electors present, who seat themselves in companies of four at several tables, which have to be so placed that the electors can walk round them and survey the process of counting. The president distributes the papers among the various tables, and the scrutineers proceed with the enumeration. When this is finished and verified, the president declares the result of the voting, which has immediately to be transmitted to the chief polling-place; so it is signed by him and forthwith despatched. In large cities the results

from the different polling-stations in a constituency are speedily gathered in ; but as the vast majority of polling-places in France are rural and isolated communes, a special machinery has to be organised for the purpose. To each village Mairie where the voting has taken place comes a mounted gendarme, who gallops with the results of the poll to the chef-lieu of the canton. Thence they are taken to the chef-lieu of the arrondissement, where the totals are added and the poll is declared. Meanwhile, at the different polling-places the ballot papers are publicly burned, excepting those which, for various reasons, the "bureau" regards as doubtful, and these are preserved in case they be required for an investigation into the election.

If no candidate have polled an absolute majority of all the votes recorded, and at the same time a quarter of all the votes on the register, a second ballot is ordered to take place on the ensuing Sunday week. At this second ballot a mere majority only is required, and the candidate who heads the poll is declared elected, however small a proportion he has secured of the votes recorded or of the votes on the register. Thus the principle of the second ballot as applied in these elections is not satisfactory or intelligible. It does not confine the second contest to the two candidates who head the poll on the first ballot, according to a system practised in Germany ; nor does it eliminate from the field even those candidates who have too few supporters ever to carry them, while they continue to dissipate the voting power of the party which has a majority in the constituency. The *ballotage* in France is simply the contest fought anew with all restrictions removed as to the nature of the majority. The authorities practically say to the electorates which have failed to give an absolute majority at the first competition, "You see by the first ballot the relative strength of parties and of candidates in your constituency ; it is for you now to settle your representation by the rough method of mere majority." So little reference has the second ballot to the first, that it sometimes happens that a candidate who has taken the third place at the original poll is elected deputy a fortnight later. Sometimes even a

new postulant for the seat, who did not stand at the first election, comes forward at the *ballotage* and carries it off from the old candidates, as happened at the elections of 1893 at Orange, the Roman city in Vaucluse. Examples abound of the unsatisfactory working of the second ballot. At Lyons a deputy was returned having received only one-seventh of the votes on the register. At Toulon, at the second ballot, the successful candidate polled only a third of the votes recorded, beating the second on the poll by twenty votes, a third candidate coming close behind, and the three together polling barely half of the votes on the register. In another division of the same department M. Clemenceau headed the poll by nearly 2000 votes at the first ballot, yet at the second he was beaten by the abnormal exertions of his Parisian enemies, who invaded the region and organised his defeat. The most conspicuous of the Imperialists, M. Paul de Cassagnac, at the same election met with the same fate at Mirande in the Gers. These instances show that the French in their *scrutin-de-ballotage* have not devised a system to commend itself to nations which have not yet adopted the principle of a second ballot.

In French elections the adding up of the totals of the votes counted in each electoral section, the declaration of the result of the poll, and its transmission by the Préfet of the Department to the Minister of the Interior, are successive operations, which give a candidate only the presumption that he is elected. The definite mandate of deputy has to be conferred on him by an authority apt to decide if the conscience of the voters and the provisions of the law have been respected. That supreme authority is the Chamber of Deputies, and as every election, whether disputed or not, requires validation, the anomaly follows of a body which has no valid existence verifying its own powers before it comes into being.

VI

The newly-elected deputies meet at the Palais Bourbon on an appointed day; the oldest among them takes the chair, and the

six youngest act temporarily as secretaries of the Chamber. A provisional President and Vice-Presidents are then chosen, the choice usually being confirmed when the Chamber is legally constituted by the validation of the powers of one-half of its full complement of members. To effect this without delay the deputies are forthwith divided by lot into eleven bureaux or committees, among which the papers relating to all the elections are distributed according to the alphabetical order of the departments, the 1st Bureau investigating the returns in those from the Ain to the Aube, and the 11th in those from Vaucluse to the Yonne, as well as in Algeria and the Colonies. The bureaux then resolve themselves by lot into sub-committees of five, which proceed to report on the elections not questioned. These are dealt with expeditiously by individual committee-men, whose reports are usually accepted by the bureau. Consequently the Chamber on the morrow of its assembling is able to validate the powers of half its members. The President calls the names of the departments in alphabetical order. The Reporters, who have their verifications ready, advance to the tribune and read a form to the effect that in the department of the Ardennes, arrondissement of Mézières, or in the department of the Aisne, arrondissement of Soissons, the elections were held, at which so many electors voted on a register of so many, with the result that M. X. was elected, beating M. le Marquis de Z. by so many votes. M. X. was declared deputy, and as the election was conducted regularly, as no protest has been entered, and as M. X. satisfies the conditions of the law as to age and nationality, the 1st Bureau recommends the validation of his election. The Chamber at once ratifies the decision of the committee, and in an afternoon's sitting several hundreds of elections are thus validated.

The validation is completed with equal celerity if the Reporter entrusted with the papers advise that the protests filed with them are frivolous, or of such a nature that if substantiated they would not change the result of the poll. It is competent for any elector to initiate an inquiry into an election. No formal petition has to be presented; no sworn information is required;—nothing

but a protest addressed in writing to the "Presidency" of the Chamber, whence it is forwarded to the committee which has charge of the constituency in question. If the protests are copious, or grave in character, the consideration of the election so questioned is postponed until all the uncontested returns are dealt with. Then the member of the sub-committee who has been specially charged to look into this election makes his report. If it coincide with the views of the majority of the entire committee he is chosen as Reporter to advocate its conclusions before the Chamber, which may reject or accept them after debate. If the committee recommend the invalidation of the election the usual practice is for the Reporter to make a speech, supporting the decision, which is answered by the deputy whose seat is at stake. The Chamber comes to a resolution without any semblance of impartiality. If it reverse the report of a committee validating a seat, it is most often because the chances of the ballot have given a majority to that particular bureau antagonistic to the majority in the Chamber; for a tribunal composed of members whose chief qualification is partisan zeal cannot but be biassed in adjudicating on party questions. In the division lists the Republicans do not always appear all ranged on one side and the Reactionaries on the other. As far back as Gambetta's time, in the investigations of the elections of 1881, Radicals are sometimes found voting with Monarchists in favour of the validation of Clerical candidates, not from impartiality but from desire to annoy the Opportunists.¹ No doubt there are votes given in these divisions from pure motives of justice; but as a rule the party groups stand by their members, and a Reactionary would never vote for the invalidation of a Reactionary, nor a Socialist for that of a Socialist. One reason obviously is that deputies have neither time nor inclination to peruse or to listen to lengthy reports; so they follow their usual practice in the Chamber of voting with their political

¹ The experiment made of scrutin-de-liste in 1885 afforded an opportunity of wholesale executions of deputies of the Opposition, as, though it was decided that discrimination might be made between the individual cases of members, in certain departments the elections of the entire lists were annulled.

group. Sometimes a committee decides a case on its merits independently of party consideration ; but if the decision be not agreeable to the majority in the Chamber, the same impartiality will not be observed there. When a committee has invalidated an election, the Chamber, instead of accepting or rejecting this decision, has the third alternative of ordering a local investigation to be conducted by members of the Chamber, the bureaux nominating commissioners who, in turn, choose a delegation from among themselves to hold the inquiry on the spot.

This happened in 1889 after an election in the Hérault, a department as famous for its electioneering scandals as for the extent of its vineyards and the past traditions of its capital, Montpellier. Among the Cevennes, remote from the fertile plains about that once frequented resort, is the arrondissement of Lodève, where M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the distinguished economist and member of the Institute, contested the seat of the Radical sitting-member. The final official return gave M. Ménard-Dorian a majority of 17 on a poll of over 14,000, which M. Leroy-Beaulieu protested was due to the fraudulent addition of 91 rejected voting papers. This was so little disputed that on the proposal of the Reporter of the committee, a Republican, the election of M. Ménard-Dorian was invalidated. M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, whose opinions are those of the *Journal des Débats*, the organ of the Left Centre, which supported him in this affair, was in the eyes of the Republican majority a Reactionary, and therefore to be kept out of Parliament if possible. It therefore, instead of invalidating the election, voted a local inquiry, which after long delays confirmed the invalidation.

This was a case where the majority made use of a parliamentary form for a purely partisan purpose. The illegality of the return was from the first undisputed ; but the partisans of the unfairly-elected candidate knew that if the seat were forthwith declared vacant his opponent would be returned ; whereas if the vacancy were postponed till a new register came into operation that might, with skill, be rendered impossible. We shall return to the Lodève election, which abounded in in-

structive incidents ; as in examining French electoral proceedings it is rare to find so trustworthy a witness as M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu. The use of a parliamentary majority to keep so eminent a man out of the legislature is not an incident necessarily of Republican government. It is partly the result of the instability of regimes in France which makes the upholders of each successive one regard as lawful all expedients against its opponents, and thence by an easy transition as equally lawful to be used against the opponents of the group in power : it is partly the result of the inability of the French to appreciate parliamentary institutions. But even in legislatures which have moments of judicial-mindedness (as has the British House of Commons on the occasion of the re-election of the Speaker), it is improbable that a party majority would remain perpetually impartial in adjudicating on the elections of the Opposition.

With the growth of a sentiment, acknowledged in countries where it is not cultivated, that legislative elections ought to be neither corrupt nor costly, their validation has become a difficult matter. The example of England in this matter is rather a warning than a model to other nations. Our former practice of trying election petitions by a committee of the House of Commons was discarded, as it was thought that the judges would form a more impartial tribunal. But the imposition of that duty upon them, in spite of their protest,¹ has not been satisfactory. It is possible that Parliament may be asked to relieve them from functions inconsistent with their office, and which, by taking them from their judicial work, cause expense and inconvenience to the nation. It is, however, unlikely that a scheme will ever be devised in England for the trial of election petitions without colossal profit to our great unproductive class, the lawyers, and consequent cost to the parties ; for scandalous as is the prolongation of costly proceedings in petitions before the judges, lawyers

¹ In Weil's *Du Jugement des Élections Contestées* is quoted a declaration of the Judges of the Court of Queen's Bench made at the instance of the Lord Chief-Justice in opposition to the Bill of 1868, which protests against the investiture of the judges with this function as "calculated to degrade the character of the magistracy."

are said to have made even larger sums out of them when they were tried before Committees of the House.

This is an evil which France has not to fear. The inconvenience which would arise out of the validation of elections by the judicial tribunals would be that, as the magistracy is dependent on the protection of politicians, the judges would never be credited with impartial decisions, however equitably they might be given. Even if the tribunal were composed of members of the Court of Appeal of Paris, who have little to look for in the way of promotion, the idea, unhappily prevalent in France, that judges are amenable to political influences would not be repressed.¹ This plan has been suggested by an authority on election procedure, M. Lefèvre Pontalis, a member of the Institute, and an admirer of the English electoral machinery. A proposition which he made, when a deputy, is open to less objection, requiring a majority of two-thirds of the Chamber to invalidate an election.² It does not seem likely that the legislature of the Republic will modify its rights of verification. Indeed it has laid down the principle that it is absolutely sovereign in such matters. In the Blanqui case, where a person disqualified by judicial condemnation was returned, the Chamber decided to invalidate his election by solemn vote, instead of accepting as his disqualification the recital of the sentences passed on him depriving him of political rights. Thus the Chamber, though it in this instance corroborated the law of the land, implied that in verifying its powers it was absolutely sovereign, competent if it chose to validate the election not only of a convict, but of a minor, a woman, or a foreigner.³

VII

The reports of the committees and the debates arising out of them are most valuable to students of electoral practices in France

¹ The attacks made on the Judges of the High Court engaged in the revision of the Dreyfus trial, in 1899, illustrate this inconvenience.

² December 19, 1885.

³ June 3, 1879. Pierre, *Traité de Droit Politique*, 363.

to supplement their personal observation. An Englishman is struck at once with the complete dissimilarity between the methods of conducting an election here and in his own country. What is less obvious, though more remarkable, is that *les mœurs électorales* (a useful expression difficult to translate) have been less transformed in France, since the absolutism of the Empire gave way to the liberty of the Republic, than in England, where the Constitution and even the occupant of the throne have remained unchanged.

A generation ago M. Lefèvre-Pontalis wrote a volume¹ comparing French and English parliamentary elections, after the electoral campaign of 1863, in which the Imperial Government had used all the machinery of centralisation to combat the growing Opposition. The author, having been present in England during the elections of 1857 and 1859, made his comparison the basis of an attack on the Empire, to which with other Liberals he rallied when, on its deathbed, it embraced Liberalism. In one description of an English contest he relates how, "amid the pealing of the church bells, the candidate arrives followed by hundreds of his partisans on horseback. Thus the youthful Lord Althorp, who at the age of twenty-two sought the suffrages of Northamptonshire, makes his entry into the county town accompanied by a cortège recalling the days of feudalism. The scene of the nomination is not less curious. The hustings, erected in one of those meadows which are the beauty of England, are surrounded by ranks of carriages arranged in a circle, reviving the traditions of the tournaments of old. Sumptuous coaches-and-four, the horses decked with favours, gallop up, laden with ladies gaily attired with the colours of the rival candidates. Among the ranks of the carriages country gentlemen and farmers on horseback station themselves to listen to the speeches; and special constables in everyday dress, only distinguished by their batons, respected insignia of authority, aid the county police to keep order."

¹ *Les lois et les mœurs électorales en France et en Angleterre.* Antonin Lefèvre-Pontalis, 1864. The word *mœurs* in this connection suggests electoral ethics as well as practices.

Now this is a description of English electoral customs as completely disappeared into the past as those of the days of Simon de Montfort. Yet it refers to so short a time ago that the young Lord Althorp was an active Minister of the Queen in the sixth decade of her reign ; and one of his former colleagues, who, in the House of Commons, moved the resolution defeating the Government brought into office at that election, is a member of the third Ministry of Lord Salisbury, who was himself in Parliament years before. The French observer also is still a vigorous writer, who now directs his polemics against the misdeeds of the Third Republic. His impressions were perhaps somewhat idealised ; but it may be remarked in passing that the most sincere admirers English institutions have ever had were the French Liberals. They were the men brought up in the doctrine of 1789, who in childhood under the Monarchy of July had constantly heard from the lips of witnesses of the great Revolution sentiments, such as Madame de Stael had left as a testament, that the British constitution was "the finest monument of justice and of moral grandeur in Europe."¹ Their admiration of England had nothing in common with the grotesque Anglomania which now pervades the least intelligent section of the Parisian population : it was a profound and philosophic sentiment. It has sometimes been suggested that the more we reform our Constitution the greater sympathy we shall enjoy in the nation which is the offspring of the French Revolution. This is a grave error. Gambetta, for reasons of personal friendship, had a strong liking for English Radicalism of a certain school. But he left no successors, and the only abiding cult for England lingers among the survivors of the school of M. Léon Say, who look with dismay at changes which tend to transform the pattern of their political creed into a new-fashioned model fitted with untried machinery.

In France, for all its constitutional instability, the reason why electoral methods under the Republic bear a remarkable likeness to those of the Second Empire is not merely that the bulk of the

¹ *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution Française*, Ouvrage posthume, 1818.

electoral laws survive : it is that its fabric of centralised Government outlives revolutions and changes of regime. Constructed by Napoleon on the remains of foundations laid by the ancient monarchy, it is so strong that it perpetuates certain relations between the Government and the governed, which no revision of constitution, no reform of organic laws, materially effects. To foreign eyes this is markedly conspicuous in the circumstances which attend the exercise of the franchise.

Under the Second Empire the most notable features of the elections were the official candidatures and the official pressure which favoured them. The former have practically disappeared ; but the latter is inherent in the French administrative system. Under Louis Napoleon the rule was established that candidatures agreeable to the Government should be notified to the population by means of placards printed on the white paper which in France is reserved for official announcements,—the famous *affiches blanches*. Candidates who used them without authority were, if elected, disqualified as having thereby attempted to deceive the electorate. Royalists and Republicans alike had so suffered under this dispensation that the National Assembly, with the Germans still at the gates of Paris, and the Commune threatening its insurrection, hastened to protest against the principle. After the Seize Mai, in which minor *coup d'état* Marshal MacMahon had the support of the Bonapartists, at the elections of 1877 the white placards reappeared here and there. But this attempt of the Reactionaries to improvise the minutely organised effects of the Second Empire was, like everything else they have essayed since the War, unsuccessful, and the consolidation of the Republic dates from this failure. Moreover, one of the principal agencies of official candidature had already been abolished. The mayors of the villages, to the number of 33,000, hitherto nominated by the Government, were henceforth elected by the municipal councils ;¹ and though four-fifths of the old mayors were left undisturbed, the new derivation of their powers gave an altered character to their office. The remaining 3000 mayors of the

¹ Loi du 12 Août 1876,

towns and of the bigger villages¹ were still appointed by decree from among the members of the councils (though the Government used its prerogative with great moderation) till 1882, when the free choice of mayor was extended to all the municipalities² except to that of the capital, which has a special organisation.

We shall see to what extent the mayors are still agents of the central authority; but the change in the method of their appointment betokened a desire to modify the tradition of the Second Empire. Nevertheless, as its memory became dim, official candidature (which its subsequent modified use shows to be not repugnant to the French idea of the functions of centralised government) might later have been openly revived had the accession of President Grévy inaugurated an era of party government. Had a united Republican party been faced by a formidable Reactionary minority, and had its chief concern been the suppression of that opposition, the old electoral usages might have been resumed. The average duration, however, of M. Grévy's first Cabinets was less than seven months. This showed that the Third Republic was to be an era of government by group, the groups not being well defined, and each new ministry usually containing several members of the fallen Cabinet. There was no fear therefore of the revival of the official candidature as it had flourished under Louis Napoleon, methodically organised by *Préfets* under the public direction of the central authority. Evidently in the frequent case of a contest between Republicans of different shades, it would be awkward to favour openly the claims of a candidate whose rival might be returned and might become within the Republican ranks a formidable opponent of the Ministers who had shown him hostility. But it would be contrary to the spirit of French administration if its agents abstained from all interference in the free choice by the electorate of legislative representatives.

¹ Chefs-lieux de département, d'arrondissement et de canton.

² Between 1876 and the passing of the law of February 1882 the Government had practically relinquished to the municipal councils the nomination of their mayors, overruling the wishes of the majority in only about 300 communes.

In a handbook of the Chamber, wherein the biographies of the deputies were revised by themselves, it is recorded that "M. Constans as Minister of the Interior presided over the elections of 1881, which were a brilliant victory for the Republican party."¹ Here, without disguise, a complacent Minister declares that the results at the polls of a general election were due to his being at the time Minister of the Interior, with all the wires of the French administrative machine in his hands. In 1889 M. Constans was again at the Place Beauvau, and he superintended the elections on this more critical occasion with even greater success. Boulangism, in spite of the flight of its leader, was still a force in France, and it needed a skilful wielding of the weapon of centralisation to combat the dissatisfaction with the existing regime. So great was the repute of M. Constans as the strong man for manipulating elections, that, in spite of virulent attacks made on his personal character, his return to office, to direct the elections of 1893 against the party of disorder, was desired by many moderate politicians who did not share his political opinions. Such is the importance attributed to the occupancy of the Ministry of the Interior during the electoral period, that M. Dupuy, who in 1893 held that office in conjunction with the Premiership, publicly announced that it was he and not M. Constans who was to preside over the coming elections. On the eve of them, in accordance with a practice handed down from the Empire, he summoned the *Préfets* to Paris to elicit the latest information upon the state of feeling in the country and to give them their final orders.

Their are few French politicians who do not regard the interference of the Government in elections as legitimate, excepting unsuccessful candidates who have been victims of the system. That there is no popular sense of its impropriety is shown by the fact that ephemeral ministers do take the trouble to direct elections on the principle of *sic vos non vobis*, as it is nearly

¹ *La chambre de 1889*, par A. Bertrand, Secrétaire-Rédacteur du Sénat. M. Constans retired to the Senate in 1889, and in the handbook of the Upper House, *Nos Sénateurs*, 1894-1897, it is again recounted that he "presided over the legislative elections in 1881 and 1889."

always for his successors that the Minister of the Interior works,¹ and it is impossible for him to foretell which deputies will continue to support the Cabinet after the elections, and which will combine with Reactionaries or Socialists to bring about its speedy downfall.

At the elections of 1893, and again in 1898, there was an average of two Republican candidates for every seat in the provinces.² In the former year³ there were only about seventy contests confined to one avowed Reactionary and one Republican, the solitary class of combat wherein by tradition it were legitimate for the central Government to interfere. Hence the candidatures which have in their incidents some resemblance to those patronised by the Empire are now seen only in those rare regions where the Reactionaries are a formidable force. In the Gers, when M. Paul de Cassagnac in 1893 lost the seat he had held for eighteen years as a Bonapartist, the Préfet on the eve of the poll issued *affiches blanches* prejudicial to his candidature, which, as a veteran Imperialist, he must have admired in principle, though they contributed to his defeat. This was celebrated by the authorities quite in the manner of the

¹ M. Constans, after directing the 1881 elections as Minister of the Interior in the first Ferry Cabinet, was turned out of office a month later by the advent of the Gambetta Ministry. M. Allain Targé, Minister of the Interior at the elections of 1885, remained in office ten weeks after the polls. M. Constans, after his success in 1889, did himself remain at the Place Beauvau for over two years, but the Tirard Ministry, of which he was then a member, disappeared in a few months, he resuming his portfolio under M. de Freycinet. He, however, never became Prime Minister, and M. Dupuy was the first Republican Premier who was Minister of the Interior at an election. He remained in office three months after directing the elections of 1893, being dismissed a fortnight after the reassembling of Parliament. After the elections of 1898 the same fate attended M. Barthou, Minister of the Interior in the Méline Cabinet.

² If the department of the Seine were included it would considerably raise the average, as there were over 300 candidates of various shades of Republicanism for the forty-five constituencies of Paris and its suburbs; but I have omitted the metropolis, as, curiously enough, the Préfet of the Seine and the agents of the central Government have at its seat no influence whatever. In the provinces, while there was an average of two Republican candidates for every seat, in many constituencies there was no contest, and in many others there were three or four Republicans opposed to one another.

³ In 1898 the number was rather smaller. At this election the Méline Government in certain departments used its administrative pressure on behalf of Oppor-tunist or "Progressist" candidates against Socialists.

period when M. de Persigny superintended the elections, and the day after the poll the successful Republican candidate made a triumphal entry into Auch, the capital of the department, with the Préfet, who escorted him round the archi-episcopal city in a carriage-and-four.¹ Previously, in 1888, when M. Flourens, Minister for Foreign Affairs, not hitherto in Parliament, was elected deputy in the Hautes Alpes, the Radicals declared he owed his return to an official candidature accompanied by all the coercive practices of the Second Empire. The Chamber was so nearly convinced that this was so that it was only by a narrow majority that it rejected a proposition disqualifying Ministers from being candidates at bye-elections.²

The new forms of official candidature, which have grown up under the Third Republic, are more interesting to study as special products of France than easy to justify under the altered condition of things. Sometimes the Government interferes on behalf of one Republican candidate against another, without, indeed, the intervention of the Préfet, but by other methods well known under the Empire. In 1893 the contest at Sancerre in the Cher was between the sitting member, M. Maret, the well-known Radical journalist, and M. Picot, a distinguished member of the Institute. To an outsider it seemed that the rare instance of an electoral contest between two Republicans above the mediocre level of parliamentary candidates in France, would have been an occasion to allow the constituency to pronounce its opinion freely on the respective merits of two schools of Liberalism. This was not the view of the Dupuy Cabinet in Paris. Desiring the return of M. Maret, the Minister of Agriculture bethought him that a Government subsidy might be acceptable to the Beirichon vine-growers, and three days before the poll³ he indited to "Monsieur le Député" an official letter announcing the gift, and making it clear to the peasants that but for M. Maret being their member, they would have got no contribution. "I

¹ September 4, 1893.

² February 17, 1888. The Tirard Ministry escaped defeat on this motion by 238 votes against 221.

³ M. Viger, August 17, 1893.

am delighted," said the Minister, in the letter published in the local journals on the eve of the poll, "to be able to bear testimony to the value I attach to your kind intervention in this matter."¹

It is significant to find a Republican victim of the Imperial tribunals aided in his elections under the Third Republic by the identical methods practised under the Second Empire, and denounced by his colleagues of the Opposition thirty years before. The polemical literature of that corrupt period contains many a passage which well describes France regenerate under the Republic. "The rural communes," wrote M. Jules Ferry in 1863, in a pamphlet exposing the methods of M. de Persigny, "subsist upon the alms of the Department or of the Treasury, as is too manifest, alas, at election times. The tempter has no need to dazzle their eyes with the kingdoms of the earth; the making of a road, or of a foot-bridge, satisfies the dreams of these poor people."² M. Ferry goes on to relate how an official announcement, posted at the Mairie, notified to a struggling village that the Préfet was empowered to grant about a quarter of the sum given by the Republican Minister of Agriculture to the constituents of M. Maret, and he adds, "By a happy coincidence, the benefaction happened to be made just on the eve of the poll." So does history repeat itself; and the reason why the Republic, which M. Ferry helped to establish, reproduces the acts which he denounced as proving the corruption of the Empire, he indicates in the same pages—"It is not the Government that I accuse, but centralisation; not the heir, but the heritage."

If in the Berry the Government of 1893 favoured the candidate of the Extreme Left against the moderate Republican, its agents took the opposite course in Languedoc. A radical journal of Toulouse, to which curiously enough M. Maret was a

¹ In 1898 the Méline Government supported M. Picot against M. Maret, with less zeal however and without success. On the other hand, in the next department, the Indre, the prefecture supported a Radical sitting member against a moderate Republican, who professed similar opinions to those of M. Picot.

² *La lutte électorale en 1863.*

contributor, denounced in such strong terms the "scandalous pressure" exercised by the Préfet of the Aude in favour of the Moderate candidate for Carcassonne, to the prejudice of his Radical opponent, that a duel took place between that functionary and the editor. In Provence, at the same elections, we find another phase of electoral influence exercised by the central authority. At Draguignan, M. Clemenceau, who headed the poll at the first vote, and was beaten on the second ballot, was said to have had the support of the Préfet of the Var, although the Government undoubtedly wished to rid the Chamber of the redoubtable destroyer of ministries. The speedy removal of that official after the elections indicated that, with M. Clemenceau out of the way, the Minister felt that he might with impunity make an example of a functionary who had favoured him.

The foregoing examples demonstrate two facts: first, that the principle of interference in the elections by the central power is approved of by all the parties in the State, every group, Reactionary and Republican, having in turn profited from it: and second, that the system is, under the Republic, applied in a manner so undisciplined and casual as to have no effect in promoting that stability of government which would be its justification. The ephemeral character of French ministries; the confused sectional groups within the Republican party; the disappearance of a serious opposition to the Republican form of government;—all these causes have made it difficult to retain the systematic regulation of the elections in the hands of the central authority in Paris.

Although few of the Préfets remain in their posts long enough to become familiar with the details of civic life in the departments, and although the mayors are no longer nominated by the State, the former have still considerable power to bring pressure on the municipalities within their jurisdiction. The mayors of a department are under the authority of the Préfet; and, apart from the respect which all French officials have for the chiefs of the administrative hierarchy, it is greatly to the

interest of their municipalities, whether poor rural communes or relatively large and prosperous towns, that they should be on good terms with the prefecture. The acceleration of questions like those of the making of roads or of tramways depends on the goodwill of the Préfet, who has the power to delay or to modify schemes of local improvement. The *dossiers*¹ relating to communal affairs are lodged at the prefecture for consideration; and at election times it is easy for a Préfet to retain them until the eve of the polls, despatching them at that critical moment to their respective communes endorsed with the prefectural decision. An active functionary, ambitious of a reputation for administrative ability, has many occasions for supplementing the favours thus accorded to local projects. By offering occasional hospitality to the mayors and not disdaining them if they wear the blue blouse or the wooden sabots, by personally visiting the communes, and by generally establishing friendly relations with the municipalities, an adroit Préfet can, without appearing to use untoward pressure, make himself a position which, if it fall short of that of grand elector of the department, is one of commanding influence at election times.

If one of the Republican representatives of the department happen to be a politician of influence, a leader of a group in the Chamber, or the owner of a journal, it is sometimes more to the interest of the Préfet to cultivate his protection than that of the evanescent holder of the portfolio of the Interior.² There is no safer means of gaining promotion in the administrative career than the sagacious recognition of the quality of a candidate, even

¹ It is remarkable that this useful term has no corresponding word in English administrative terminology, although the *dossier* is produced in great abundance in the public offices in Whitehall. It is officially defined as the collection in one envelope or cover—technically called the *chemise*—of all the documents, correspondence, reports, etc., relating to one affair or person. The *dossiers* stored at the Préfecture of Police at Paris contain the secret biographies of many French citizens of all conditions. The extensive set of *dossiers* compiled by M. Wilson, the famous son-in-law of President Grévy, related to the lives and achievements of some of his colleagues in the Chamber, and was a precious possession, which was said to account for the impunity of his return to public life. The *dossiers* referred to above have a less personal character (see p. 118).

² The average tenure of the portfolio of the Interior is nine months.

though he be not an ardent supporter of the ministry of the moment. Hence an unofficial politician may have at his disposal machinery intended to be used only in the interests of the actual nominees of the central Government. Not that the support given by the Préfet in a case like this is often at variance with the orders he receives from Paris. The central administration as a rule does not combat the candidature of an outgoing deputy, no matter to what section of the Republican party he belongs, if he have a strong position in his constituency. The Préfets of the Third Republic are disposed to recognise the personal situation of the candidate, provided that he be not a Reactionary. This is how it is possible in some departments that the prefecture should support the candidature of an Opportunist in one arrondissement, of a Radical in another, and of a Socialist in a third.

Instances abound of the official favours of the prefecture being shown to one Republican candidate or group at the expense of another. In March 1893 M. Bazille, the "Independent Republican" deputy for Poitiers, called the attention of the Minister to the electoral preferences shown by the Préfet of the neighbouring department of the Haute Vienne. At the same sitting of the Chamber, M. Déandréis, the Radical deputy for Montpellier, made similar complaints about the Préfet of the Hérault, who was defended by M. Mas, the member for Béziers, in the same department, and it was interesting to observe that the defender of the functionary retained his seat at the next elections while his assailant was beaten. In the Puy de Dôme,¹ the prefecture was in the hands of the Radical deputy for Clermont-Ferrand, M. Guyot-Dessaigne,² who, having been a zealous functionary of the Empire, was conversant with the traditions of official candidature. In this department the official representatives of the Republic had either to work with the deputy and

¹ *Journal des Débats*, August 23, 1893.

² M. Guyot-Dessaigne had on one occasion been appointed Minister, but the Floquet Cabinet, which he was invited to join, fell a week later, in February 1889. After these elections he was Minister of Public Works for over four months in the Radical Bourgeois Cabinet, 1895-96.

for him or to go elsewhere. It is needless to multiply instances. The situation was well summed up by a Republican deputy after the elections of 1893, when, in a speech to his constituents, he said: "In one department the administrative body supports the Liberal policy, in the next one the Radicals are favoured, while in another the Préfet carries out the orders of his Minister, and the Sous-Préfets follow a different line. There are many functionaries, whom we know of, who are much more preoccupied about giving satisfaction to the Government of to-morrow than to the Government they represent, and this is a state of anarchy which the country wants to put an end to." When M. Félix Faure made these sound observations to his fellow-townsmen at Havre,¹ neither he nor his hearers imagined that in little more than a year his voice would become the most authoritative in France.

Under the Third Republic a prefecture has often been a stepping-stone to an embassy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the legitimate ambition of a Préfet should induce him to cultivate the good graces of a deputy likely to have influence to promote him. But if the only officials in a department who waited on the favour of a politician were the Préfet and his lieutenants, the evil of the system would not be extensive. M. Jules Ferry, in 1863, in calling attention to the electioneering forces with which centralisation could move universal suffrage, gave a list of some of the functionaries who helped to promote the election of the candidate of the Government:—"From the rector-of-academy to the humblest village schoolmaster; from the receiver-general of finance to the writ-server; from the manager of the Government factories to the licensed dealer in tobacco; from the post-office inspector to the letter-carrier; from the director of public domains to the road-mender; from the president of the tribunal to the gendarme and rural police-

¹ November 4, 1893. When I noted this speech of the future President of the Republic, at the time it was made, I preserved it as the utterance of an independent but not prominent politician, who, though he had been Under-Secretary for the Colonies several times, had never been a Minister, and who seemed to represent the feelings of a commercial community rather than of governmental circles.

man." Now all these officials in France still depend on the central Government; and most of them are as ready now as under the Empire to play the part of political agents at election times, with the difference that, owing to the instability of ministries and to the divisions in the Republican party, they do not get their orders so directly from headquarters.

If a candidate at the present day is openly supported by the prefecture, he arrives in the communes to hold his meetings escorted by all the authorities—judges, tax-collectors, schoolmasters, and road-inspectors. If, however, he be an active Republican deputy presenting himself for re-election—even though the Préfet be neutral for some reason, such as the recency of his arrival and his consequent ignorance of his subordinates—the candidate will make his electioneering rounds accompanied by the same imposing bodyguard, as though he were the nominee of the Minister of the Interior. Here arises the evil which is perhaps more demoralising than the official candidature under the Empire. The Imperial manipulation of elections, deplorable from our English point of view, was intelligible. It had for its aim the stability of the regime. The justification for modifying the free expression of the suffrage was, that a people prone to revolution needed the control of the central power in the exercise of the franchise. That idea is still inherent in the mind of the French administrative hierarchy. But under the Republic the ministries are too feeble and short-lived to direct the working of the machinery, which, preserved in all its perfection, may one day be a magnificent booty for a soldier of fortune, who may release her from the parliamentary system. Meanwhile, in default of effective ministries, the machine of centralisation is worked by other hands. The Republican deputy seeking re-election is supported in his campaign by the authorities of the cantons and the communes, whether he have the countenance of the prefecture or only its neutrality. The reason is that one-half of these functionaries owe their situations to the candidate and the other half hope for promotion if they aid his re-election.

If the Chamber of Deputies were entirely filled with paragons of virtue, their fine qualities could not survive the demoralisation caused by the amount of irregular patronage vested in the hands of parliamentary representatives. There is no parish or hamlet in France which does not contain a certain number of holders of places of profit under the Government. This legion of mercenaries, no longer organised to protect the Ministry of the day, looks to the deputy as the fountain of honour and promotion; and it seems to be an established principle in France that neither can be obtained without solicitation. Whether it be official advancement or a *bureau de tabac* that is sought, the ministers' secretaries tell office-seekers that laudatory testimonials and laudable records of service count for little without the recommendation of a deputy. So extensively is this method of solicitation encouraged that the professors who conduct the examination for University diplomas and for admission to the Military College of St. Cyr complain that the appeals they receive from the parents of candidates (indiscreet ebullitions of parental anxiety not unknown in other countries) are significantly emphasised by covering letters of recommendation from deputies—professors being exposed to this affront by the fact that in France they are functionaries dependent on the Government for promotion.¹

¹ An important statement on this subject, by M. Lavisé, the eminent Academician and Professor at the Sorbonne, appeared in the *Journal des Débats* on August 2, 1893, in which instances of efforts made to bring political pressure on examiners in the performance of their duty were given with much detail. M. Lavisé, who is one of the highest academical authorities in France, was reported to have said, "Les mœurs électorales nous envahissent. Les électeurs savent qu'on n'obtient plus rien sans le demander. Pour avoir un bureau de tabac, un avancement, une décoration, le coup de piston est utile, nécessaire même. Les bureaux de ministère disent aux solliciteurs :—'Faites-vous recommander par votre député. Un dossier sans lettre de député est incomplet.' Ils savent aussi les électeurs que la lettre de député est souvent plus forte que la lettre de la loi : qu'elle apaise les rigueurs de la régie, de la douane, même celles de l'autorité militaire. Il est naturel que des parents s'imaginent qu'un diplôme s'obtient comme un bureau de tabac, par prière, et qu'on entre dans une École comme dans un emploi, par faveur." Another Academician, devoted to the Republican regime, M. Jules Claretie, three years later said that he had been condoling with a law student who had failed in his examination for the diploma, and he replied, "Il n'y a rien d'étonnant : je n'avais pas de recommandations."—*Temps*, 13 juillet 1896.

The deputy being regarded as an instrument of such utility to the electors, it is not surprising that associations are formed in the constituencies to organise the choice of the dispenser of patronage in case the sitting member die, or retire, or become unpopular. It is then that the new form of official candidature is brought into action. The local committees bear no resemblance to the party organisations in our country, notably in the peculiarity that their leading spirits, especially in rural districts, are often persons in Government employ. The *cabaret* is usually the headquarters of these associations, which are frequently presided over by the village schoolmaster, who, in his capacity of municipal secretary, is a person of political importance. Among the members are generally to be found some local officials of the Government, who perform useful but humble functions in connection with the levying of the taxes, the distribution of the post, or the maintenance of the roads.

Whatever the local features of these coteries¹ they have immense power, not merely in the nomination of deputies, but as the intermediaries and distributors of the patronage exercised by parliamentary representatives, which is not only locally considerable, but extends beyond the limit of the constituencies.² The combined influence of a deputy who has favours at his disposal and of the organisations which support him is such that critics of the system declare that France has two constitutions.

¹ These committees vary in name and in organisation in different regions of France, and in some parts where they are most powerful their ostensible aim is not political. In Vauluse and in the Var, for instance, there exists an institution called the *chambrée*, a village society consisting of a score or so of members,—sometimes several of these clubs being found in a single commune. A room is hired for the meetings, and the primary object of these clubs is said to be the cheaper enjoyment of refreshments by means of the co-operative system. No political test is required for membership, but each one usually contains a member whose strong will gives him the position of leader, and in rural France a leader of opinion is usually an active politician of advanced views. It is easy to see how, amid the political indifference of provincial life, the president of each of these societies becomes a political agent of influence, and how each *chambrée* forms a drilled body of electors under the orders of an active chief.

² An inquiry into the conduct of some members of the Parisian police force brought to light incidentally the remarkable fact that no fewer than sixty sergents-de-ville in the capital owed their nomination to the deputy of a provincial arrondissement whence they all came (*Journal des Débats*, 21 Oct. 1893).

There is the written statute of 1875, according to which the executive power is confided to the ministers, who are responsible before the Chambers, and to whom the members of the administrative service are subordinate. There is an unwritten law, whereby the executive power is exercised at Paris in the bureaux of the central departments of the State, with the co-operation of members of Parliament, and in provincial prefectures under the orders of politicians.¹ The pressure brought by legislators upon the transitory ministers of the day; their relations with the permanent officials who advise on the distribution of patronage; the intrigues and solicitations which prelude the nomination to any administrative post; the life of a provincial functionary harassed by his subordination to two sets of masters, his hierarchic chiefs and the unofficial band of local wire-pullers always ready to denounce him to the deputy;—all these phases of French political existence are vouched for, not by disappointed Reactionaries or violent politicians of other extreme groups, but on the unimpeachable testimony of witnesses whose loyalty to the Republic is as well known as is their moderation. They show that the relations between the legislature and the administrative service are of an unhealthy character. It is even probable that the electoral practices now in vogue in France are more demoralising to the nation than was the Imperial method of conducting elections, as under the parliamentary system the democracy is not the victim but the voluntary accomplice of the evil which is wrought.

It must not be supposed that in all the constituencies of France the proceedings are identical. In some, like Toulouse, the unscrupulous practices of officials and of electors are abnormally frequent; while in others we find Republican deputies enjoying a local popularity which would ensure their election if the centralised system did not exist. But though the uniformity of the Second Empire is no longer found, there is a characteristic which survives regimes:—the superiority of

¹ M. Sébline : Sénateur de l'Aisne. *Discours en prenant possession du fauteuil de la présidence du centre gauche du Sénat*, 18 Jan. 1894.

Government functionaries to abstract principles, and their consistency in never supporting a candidate who is unlikely to have the ear of ministers in recommending official promotions.

When the Comte Albert de Mun was member for the Morbihan I once spent some days with him in the heart of his constituency in a mountain town remote from railways. There I observed the pleasant relations of the eloquent deputy with the inhabitants of every class (who were not all his supporters), as manifested by the cordiality of the greetings with which the Breton peasants hailed him in market-place or shop. At last one day, driving out of the town, we met on the road a group of two or three men, not attired in the picturesque costume which lingers in that region, who passed by with averted glances, not even proffering the accustomed salute which strangers exchange on the roadside in Brittany. "These are functionaries," explained M. de Mun, "and are the only members of the population, friends or opponents, who ever treat me with incivility." Yet these servants of the State, who drew their modest salaries from the Ministry of Education or of Finance or of Public Works had not necessarily any objection on principle to the deputy's opinions; but they were functionaries, and M. de Mun was a member of the Opposition. He was in the position of MM. Jules Ferry and Gambetta, or of his own kinsman, M. de Montalembert, under the Empire, and therefore to be exterminated by the weapon of centralised Government, of which, had they been old enough, they would have been the equally zealous servants under Louis Napoleon. When the Republic has given way to some other regime they will, if they live to see that day, scowl on the Republican deputy or candidate whom they meet on their promenades around the provincial town where they may then be stationed.

VIII

It will have been gathered from the foregoing pages that the hindrances to the fair exercise of the suffrage which specially

characterise French elections do not resemble the corrupt practices which have called for legislation in the United Kingdom. The invalidation of an election by the Chamber, being decided by party vote, does not necessarily prove that improper practices have prevailed. It sometimes happens that the verdict of the committee, which has examined in detail the evidence, is reversed after an impassioned debate in the full House, which knows nothing about it. Moreover, the votes of the Chamber are not given in the form of the decision of a tribunal recording that this or that specific breach of the law has been demonstrated or disproved. The deputies merely pronounce an Aye or a No on the general question of the candidate being allowed to take his seat. Again, the testimony adduced before the committees is for the most part unworthy of the name of serious evidence. It is all unsworn, and its value and nature may be judged from an incident in the Chamber of 1885, when the power of invalidation was used in a wholesale manner, as under *scrutin-de-liste* the representation of entire departments was annulled by a single vote. The committee had advised the validation of the six Monarchical deputies of the Ardèche. A Republican deputy proposed that this decision should be reversed, and in support of his argument read letters from the constituency to show that the clergy had used undue influence. "But this is mere gossip," interrupted a member of the Right, while another asked, "Where is your proof of these allegations?" "The proof is in the signatures," replied the speaker; "the letters are all from people worthy of credence"; and solely on this the Chamber invalidated the election by a party vote.¹

I have read a large number of the reports made on all the elections since the establishment of the Constitution of 1875, and of the debates arising out of them. They are useful as ethical studies in French provincial life; but they give the impression that irregularities are more prevalent than corrupt practices. The intervention of the clergy has been a frequent cause of the unseating of Reactionary deputies. Here and

¹ *Chambre des Députés: Séance du 15 Déc. 1885.*

there a priest is charged with an offence heard of sometimes in Irish election petitions,—the refusal of the sacraments for political reasons. But a Frenchman who demands the sacraments when in sound health is usually an elector likely to vote on the same side as the priest without coercion. For the most part the intervention attributed to the clergy is of the nature of political activity devoid of mysticism. The sermons condemned in the reports are more eloquent on the unattractive qualities of the anti-clericals in this world than on the penalties they are incurring in the world to come. Indeed the acts imputed to the priests which invalidate elections, often on the vaguest hearsay evidence, are of so mild a character that if they had the same effect in our country, when practised by divines of all denominations, the House of Commons, after a general election, would contain few members except those whose seats had not been contested. The distribution of voting papers, or the posting up of placards on a church-building by a curé, or his giving the benediction at a public meeting, or even the delivery of a speech on behalf of a candidate, has been held by the Chamber to be undue clerical influence.

No doubt after the *Seize Mai* the clergy constituted a most aggressive electioneering force at the orders of the Government of the day ; and in the succeeding period of bitter conflict excited by the Ferry laws, they threw themselves into it as vigorously as did their opponents. But in later years the submission to the Republic enjoined by the Vatican has been accepted by the body of the priesthood ; and clerical influence, except perhaps in Brittany, cannot be regarded as an important feature of French elections at the end of the century.

The subject of bribery we shall glance at when examining that of election expenses. Treating exists to a certain extent, as testified by the expression of electoral jurisprudence, “libations at the expense of the candidate.” But in France the custom of offering inebriating beverages to obtain or to reward services is not so widespread as in the British Islands, although the signification of the word *pour-boire*, classical since the days of the

Encyclopaedists,¹ would favour the opposite presumption. Intemperance is unhappily increasing in France, and the *cabaret* is everywhere the headquarters of local political committees. Yet though the pursuit of politics leads to a large consumption of wine in the South, and of noxious spirits in regions where wine is rare, the habits thus acquired do not seem to have produced evils of the character which have called for stringent electoral legislation in our country. The best proof that neither bribery, treating, nor intimidation exists in an acute form at French elections is that the legislation which penalises those unlawful acts dates from the beginning of the Second Empire,² and has been found to suffice for the cases that have arisen under the Republic.

The peculiar forms of corrupt practices of which we have no counterpart are the special product of centralisation. That is to say, they result from the elections being conducted under the supervision of functionaries without whose complicity they could not be used. It does not appear that they are widespread, and they flourish chiefly in the South, where the resources of political warfare are ardent. The most remarkable³ in recent years are those brought to light in two localities already mentioned for their unusual code of electoral ethics, the city of Toulouse and the department of the Hérault. In both cases the evidence of the frauds committed is more trustworthy than the hearsay testimony admitted in inquiries held by the Chamber. In the

¹ e.g. d'Alembert: *Lettre à Voltaire*, 5 Nov. 1776. In wine-growing regions the libations are offered by the constituents to the candidate, who has to imbibe at all hours of the day when he calls on hospitable electors.

² Décret organique du 2 Février 1852. The Empire was not nominally proclaimed till ten months later.

³ The elections at Nice are also of a remarkable character, almost every voter having his price; but it does not seem fair to mention the Nice elections, municipal and legislative, in connection with French electoral practices, as the fixed population of that city is as little French as is the temporary cosmopolitan crowd which frequents it in the winter. The greater part of the "County of Nice" differs from Savoy—incorporated with France by the same treaty—in that its inhabitants are in language and characteristic utterly distinct from the French. One feature of the elections, legislative and municipal, is that during the electoral period ephemeral newspapers make their appearance printed in Niçois, in which language, more akin to Piedmontese than to Provençal, the peculiar practices are conducted.

former the Government recognised them by the removal of the Préfet of the Haute Garonne, whose subordinates had favoured them; and in the latter M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, who was their victim, published a circumstantial narrative of the incidents which, like all that comes from the pen of that eminent economist, is of unimpeachable accuracy.¹

We have already seen how at Toulouse the electoral lists were falsified by the municipal officials, with the complicity of their colleagues of the central administration at the prefecture. A Government prosecution was ordered. The hero of the trial was one of the accused, Mascaras by name, a characteristic Meridional, whose tale, told to the court, glowed with the local colour of the region where Languedoc meets Gascony. There were three essentials to an election, he said, the first to have a good register (the mode of fabricating which we have noticed), the second to have good votes at the poll, and the third to have a good method of counting. It would need a volume to give even an outline of all the frauds confessed to have been committed for nine years at every election, legislative, departmental, and municipal, as it was alleged that eighty-six distinct methods of fraud² had been practised at Toulouse. The "good register" created by the friendly concurrence of the Hôtel-de-Ville and the Prefecture had to be supplemented by precautions at the poll and at the counting. The municipal officials were given a holiday on election days in order that they might preside at the ballot-boxes in the various polling-places. There it was their duty to ensure the acceptance of the votes of palpably fictitious electors; to supplement them with ballot papers concealed on their persons; or, if specially adroit, to substitute

¹ *Un chapitre des mœurs électorales en France, dans les années 1889 et 1890*, par Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, Membre de l'Institut.

² One of the more rudimentary methods, which is said to be practised occasionally all over France, arises out of the provision enacting that a voting paper bearing any exterior mark to make its identification possible shall be null. The mayor or presiding officer has only to blacken his fingers and with them to impress vigorously the ballot paper handed to him by supporters of the candidate whom it is wished to defeat, so that at the count the black smudges may, by a liberal interpretation of the law, invalidate the votes.

these for the papers of suspected voters by a dexterous sleight of hand in their passage to the box. It was necessary also to look to the constitution of the "bureau"; for if by chance an unsympathetic or even an unskilful citizen were appointed to check the votes with the register, complications might arise at the counting. Even despite precautions, sometimes the enumeration of the ballot papers did not produce the anticipated results. It was on one of these untoward occasions that the secretary-general of the Mairie said to his subordinate, who testified to the saying in court, "It is for you to complete the work of universal suffrage."¹ Sometimes the work of universal suffrage was too completely perfected. Once, with the expansive exaggeration of the South, one of these patriots introduced into the ballot-box no less than 300 voting-papers more than were required for the favoured candidate, and it required all the skill of the carefully-selected counting committee to make the final declaration of the poll consistent with the votes checked on the register.

The method of appointing this counting committee at parliamentary elections is one of the many electoral heritages which the Republic has accepted from the Second Empire, to continue the tradition that universal suffrage is an instrument to operate under the vigilant superintendence of the central Government. By the decree of 1852, the committee consists of three members of the departmental council, nominated for this purpose by the Préfet:² its duties being to add up the totals sent in from the various polling-places, to examine the doubtful voting-papers, and finally to declare the result of the polls.

In the election of the Lodève division of the Hérault in 1889, the returns from the communes gave M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu a majority over M. Ménard-Dorian, who had the support of the prefecture. But the counting committee had been

¹ Cour d'Assizes de la Haute Garonne, 27 Nov. 1894.

² Décret Réglementaire, 2 Fév. 1852. This, like the Organic Decree, was promulgated by Louis Napoleon after the Coup d'État before he was Emperor; and the enactments for the organisation of universal suffrage, which the Republic has seen good to retain, were made with a view to the plebiscite in November 1852, which established the Second Empire.

selected with particular care by the Préfet, and it repaired the undesired result by adding to the official candidate's total 91 votes, which the local bureaux had rejected as bad. We have seen how the majority in the Chamber, unable to condone this flagrant act, directed a local inquiry in order to postpone the unseating of the fraudulently returned deputy until the new election could take place on the new register. The Minister of the Interior wished to aid the official candidate in manipulating the new lists. He therefore refused to take action at the request of M. Leroy-Beaulieu in constraining mayors who were favourable to his opponent to publish, as the law required, the decisions of the local revision commissioners. The work was so well done that M. Leroy-Beaulieu, in his elaborate narrative, containing detailed protests from a large number of communes, concludes that there were 800 names irregularly added to or struck off the electoral lists. Among the unqualified persons, who were thus made electors, were 123 labourers temporarily employed on a canal. On the polling day of the second election they were marched to the vote in procession by the Government surveyor, flags flying and trumpets playing. Each man received at the entrance to the mairie a voting-paper for M. Ménard-Dorian, and was accompanied to the ballot-box by an inspector of the canal.¹ Previously the Administration had discharged from employment in the forests of the State a number of electors for refusing to promise to vote for the official candidate, who by these means became deputy for Lodève.

The immense advantage possessed by a candidate who has official support makes politicians of all groups reluctant to limit by a rigid tariff the money which may be spent in furthering an election. It is not merely rich Reactionaries who wish to remain unfettered by the law in this respect. There are Radicals who declare that a certain expenditure is often the only method a candidate has of combating the influence of the prefecture. A bill was introduced in 1893, which provided that an election

¹ *Un chapitre des mœurs électorales.* Protestations des communes de St. Jean de Fos et de St. Pierre de la Fage.

agent should be appointed, as in England, who should publicly attest that the expenses of his candidate had not exceeded fifty francs (£2) for every hundred electors on the register. The frugality of the scale compared to that of the English model is significant.¹ But though it was supported by politicians of various opinions, it was not accepted by any section of the Republicans, and the *Justice* of M. Clemenceau joined with the *Journal des Débats* in condemning not the tariff but the principle. A writer in the Radical organ asked, "In a constituency of 14,000 electors, supposing a candidate has spent before polling day the whole of the 7000 francs allowed, and his more sparing rival produces at the last moment a calumnious placard, or the prefecture, if it happens to be against him, uses official pressure which calls for denunciation; is he either to be without defence, or to disqualify himself by spending another hundred francs in rebutting the calumny or exposing the official intrigue?"

The argument, no doubt, will not seem valid to English politicians; but it represents French feeling on the subject. The reason why the House of Commons decided that candidates for a seat in it should submit to undignified and vexatious restrictions, was that before their creation certain evils had become so acute as to call for restrictive remedies. But these evils are not widespread in France. As far as I can gather, of the 1500 to 1800 candidates whom a general election calls before the constituencies, few exceed the modest limits which the imitators of English legislation wished to impose, and only an infinitesimal proportion ever reach the maximum scale authorised in England and Wales. A well-known minister who, in 1893, won a hardly-contested seat from the Royalists in a large constituency of 80 communes, gave me the details of his expenditure, and he did not suggest that that of his Reactionary

¹ The English scale allows in boroughs £350 and in counties £650 for 2000 electors, whereas, according to this project, £40 would have to suffice if there were a constituency in France so small. For 10,000 electors the English scale allows £590 in boroughs and £1130 in counties, as against £200 according to the French scheme. It was brought forward by M. Hubbard, Radical Deputy of Seine-et-Oise, and among its supporters was a Radical-Socialist, a Boulangist, and a Bonapartist.

opponent was higher. There were 24,000 electors, which, according to the tariff proposed to the Chamber, would have entitled him to spend 12,000 francs, and his expenses were only two-thirds of that sum, equivalent to £320. With an English county electorate of 24,000, he would have been entitled to spend £1970, or more than six times as much as his outlay.¹ In Paris elections are said to be more costly; but it is certain that few candidates for metropolitan seats are wealthy enough to corrupt electors with money. This, moreover, is a general reason why throughout France a lavish expenditure by candidates within the electoral period is not a public danger. Not only are they for the most part men of slender means, but at normal times there are no political organisations to give them pecuniary aid.

The enormous sums spent on elections during the Boulangist campaign must be regarded as subsidies to promote a revolution rather than as corrupt electoral expenditure. It is probable, moreover, that of the three millions of francs given by the Duchess d'Uzès and the four millions by the Comte de Paris for electoral purposes,—more than a quarter of a million sterling from two persons alone,—a very large proportion was carefully preserved by the adventurers who surrounded General Boulanger from being used for the corruption of the democracy. The Comte de Paris had a costly experience of providing unproductive electioneering funds. When, after the failure of his alliance with the Boulangists, he finally announced the reduction of his contributions to the Monarchical propaganda, it was explained

¹ The 8000 francs (£320) spent by the deputy in question (who had not then been a minister), were roughly divided into printing, advertisements, etc., 4600 francs (£184); hire of carriages, 700 francs (£28); postage, distribution of circulars, and sundries, 2700 francs (£108). The "personal expenses" in this case were confined to the sums paid for carriages to drive about the constituency, as the candidate stayed with friends during the contest. The cost of this election was, however, high compared to that of other contests. The Sous-Préfet of Les Sables d'Olonne told me that in one division of his arrondissement where about 13,000 electors polled, the expenses of the successful Republican candidate did not exceed 1500 (£60), and that in the other division of similar size a popular but impecunious Royalist gentleman was returned for an even smaller outlay; and this was in the Vendée where party fights are keen.

that the bulk of them neither directly nor indirectly had reached the electorate, having been consumed in the sustenance of the editors and owners of dull provincial newspapers without influence or even readers.

That there have been under the Third Republic elections at which excessive sums have been corruptly spent is certain ; but for the reasons noted they are abnormal. There is the case of M. Daniel Wilson, the celebrated son-in-law of M. Grévy, who is said to have expended a fabulous amount on his election at Loches in 1893. It was invalidated, not by a party vote, but by the remarkable majority of 465 to 2. The deputies possibly regretted that they had not the power to disqualify their open-handed colleague from sitting again, as the electors of Indre-et-Loire sent him back to the Palais Bourbon some weeks later. M. Wilson is, however, a unique character in French public life, and that proposition must not be taken as gainsaying the current belief that some of his censors are themselves adepts in branches of political corruption which we shall examine later. It only refers to the singular history of the simple citizen who, having caused the removal of his father-in-law from the Presidency, and subsequently endangered the existence of the Republic, established a personal monarchy in a region of Touraine, less contested than that of Louis XI. when he engaged Cardinal la Balue in the donjon of Loches. M. Wilson's methods of maintaining the allegiance of his subjects do not resemble those with which that redoubtable sovereign terrorised his adversaries. At election times the roads, once grim with the gibbets of Olivier de Daim, are gay with cheerful crowds of distributors of circulars and of ballot papers, several thousands of the voters being employed in that remunerative pastime on the banks of the Indre.

The generous practices which enrich that smiling valley may be regarded as purely local, though there are deputies from other districts who pay a high price for the privilege of a seat in the Chamber. A Royalist deputy in whose château I once stayed told me that the constituency which surrounded it cost him annually 100,000 francs (£4000). That, however, meant that

being the possessor of several fine country residences he would not have maintained an establishment in his native department had he not been its representative; but as it returned him to Parliament, he had restored his château, embellished his gardens, and keeping open house during the autumn months he put much money in circulation in a poor rural district. But though he was also a liberal benefactor of all the charities of the region, he cannot be said to have owed the tenure of his seat for twenty years to practices which the severest critic could call corrupt. The department is of Monarchical tradition, its entire deputation under scrutin-de-liste having been Reactionary; but gradually rallying to the Republic it may possibly one day dispense with the services of its long-tried member in spite of his munificence.

In the early days of the Republic there was a parliamentary inquiry into an election, which was conducted not in a judicial spirit, as it concerned a seat won by the Bonapartists with all the odium of national disaster fresh upon them. Nevertheless the distribution in the constituency of 20,000 francs (£800) by the skilful hands of M. Rouher, then employing all his experience to popularise the name of the Prince Imperial, escaped the condemnation of the deputies who annulled the election of the Nièvre. The report, signed by several well-known Republicans, including two future Prime Ministers, MM. Jules Ferry and Goblet, said of the subsidy, "We cannot regard this remittance of money as a materially reprehensible act."¹ Now the sum of £800 brought into a French rural constituency from outside at an election time was a relatively huge addition to the normal outlay of a candidate. But the fact that biassed political partisans, Royalist and Republican, declared that their Bonapartist opponents had the indisputable right to spend such sums as the exigencies of the struggle demanded, was a sure demonstration that the unrestricted expenditure of money in an election was not regarded as a public danger. The experience of the subsequent twenty years seems to have confirmed that opinion. Though flagrant instances of bribery may occasionally occur,

¹ *Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale*. 1875.

there is no evidence that it is prevalent, or that as a rule election expenses are not moderate.

IX

Before leaving the subject of elections we ought, perhaps, to glance at some of their superficial aspects, the literature that they inspire, the personal controversies that arise, and the attitude of candidates one to another. In this as in all other branches of the subject it is impossible to generalise. A student of French electoral practices may witness several contests in various parts of the country, and take away no other impression than that of the dulness of the fray and the indifference of the populace ; or he may wander into a region where the vivacity of politicians portends bloodshed as a prelude to civil war. The absence of party government gives a greater prominence to local questions or to the private character of the candidates. Excepting at periods of plebiscitary movement, as in the days of Boulangism, or when Gambetta was hailed as the incarnation of the Republic, no name is ever mentioned in a parliamentary contest except that of the combatants and their supporters. I have before me copies of several ardent local journals published during a general election in places where controversy was most violent, and in not one of them, in endless columns of polemic and oratory, is the name of the then Prime Minister once mentioned either to praise or to blame him ; nor that of the minister he displaced, nor of any minister or ex-minister who had ever served the Republic except those connected with the district in which the newspaper circulated.

Hence it happens that biographical studies of the candidates take the place which altruistic praise of programmes, parties, and statesmen has in our electoral literature. These illustrated narratives of patriotism and philanthropy describe the early struggles of the candidate or the respectability of his family ; his agricultural, intellectual, or professional past ; his decorations ; or perchance his prisons, if he be a veteran of the Commune, or those of his kindred, if he be related to a "victim of December." They also have their value enhanced as human

documents by the candid criticism they provoke. For instance, in an advanced constituency two anti-clerical candidates out-boast one another of their scorn of religious observance. One of them records with pride that when he was married he dispensed with ecclesiastical ceremony; whereupon the commentary of his rival is that he had no choice in the matter, as the Church refused to bless his union with a divorced person. Sometimes an autobiographer takes as his theme his opponent's failings, and compares them with his own virtues, as in the following literal extract:—

“One of us is an honest man; but which? X. leads a luxurious life among princes of finance, though he is absolutely without resources, though his newspaper brings him in nothing and his relations have to support him; while I live modestly in the provinces where I have won an exceptional position at the bar. X. confesses he has not paid his debts; while I have paid the debts of others. His furniture is still unpaid for, yet he has shooting and horses. I deprive myself of these luxuries, but I owe nothing to my tradesmen.”

The *Journal des Débats*, which from the days when Marat bellowed in the *Ami du Peuple* to the graceless epoch in which we live has, under fourteen Constitutions, shown that vigorous political controversy can be conducted with refined taste, declares in general terms that electoral literature under the Third Republic is “abject”; and even in the rare case where the combatants bear names not unknown, the style of their polemics is not chastened thereby. In 1893 one of the bitterest contests was that at Annonay in the Ardèche. M. de Vogué of the Académie Française had rallied to the Republic. He was the candidate of M. Jules Roche, an ex-minister of local birth, who in the days of scrutin-de-liste was one of the anti-clerical list in a famous election in that department, and whose patronage of a Reactionary convert stirred the wrath of his old ally of those days, M. Boissy d'Anglas. The grandson of the celebrated President of the Convention was now member for the neighbouring Drôme; but he took an hereditary interest in Annonay,

which had first sent his ancestor to Versailles in 1789, and it was he who conducted the campaign against M. de Vogüé, likewise a descendant of a local deputy of the States-General. The organ of the Academician was the *Gazette d'Annonay*, that of his assailant the *Haute Ardèche*; and in the tone of the controversy carried on in those emphatic journals there is nothing to indicate the social class of the antagonists, nor is any trace to be found of the refinement of the Palais Mazarin or even of the polemics of the Revolution, which in their most violent phases were frequently classical in form.¹

It is probably because the political life of France commenced in the Revolution that political controversy can rarely be carried on with good-humour. There is no mean between utter indifference and bitter animosity. A gathering of electors, when passions are aroused, brings to men's minds reminiscences of meetings of the Clubs, the members of which, when the talking was done, did not disperse quietly to their homes, but in Paris marched to the Place de Grève bearing aloft on a pike the head of a fellow-citizen hanged on the way, or in the country sallied forth to burn a château or to sack a church. A political opponent is not, as in countries where the parliamentary system is a tradition, a fellow-creature to be treated with respect and even cordiality in the intervals of party battles, but a dangerous monster to be exterminated. The reason for this is that in France party division has signified not the constitutional struggle to gain or to guard administrative office under an unchanging sovereign power, but defence and attack of the existing regime. Hence

¹ The following will suffice to give an idea of the tone of the controversy. M. de Vogüé's organ denounced a writer in the rival journal in these terms: "Le drôle en a menti ! cent témoins sont prêts à cingler du même soufflet sa face" (*Gazette d'Annonay*, 2 Sept. 1893). M. Boissy d'Anglas took this as a personal challenge from the Academician, though it was signed by a local journalist, and himself penned the reply: "Il n'est question que de quelques pouces de fer que M. le Vicomte de Vogüé veut mettre dans mon ventre à moi : ce qu'il lui faut à ce cher collègue c'est le sang d'un député de la Drôme qui l'embête dans l'Ardèche. Il croit peut-être que c'est du sirop de groseille qui coule dans mes veines et il veut en goûter," etc. (*Haute Ardèche*, 23 Sept. 1893). The duel did not take place for two years (Nov. 1895), and was remarkable as being one of the few recorded in France in this generation between two gentlemen whose ancestors might have crossed swords with one another before the Revolution.

supporters of the Government, under Empire and Republic, have looked upon members of the Opposition as conspirators against the settled order of things ; while they in turn consider it legitimate to try to overturn a constitution unstable and provisional.

This mental attitude of political opponents one to another has become such a tradition of political antagonism that it survives in conflicts between supporters of the established Government. At Annonay, though the Republicanism of M. de Vogué was newly assumed, it was vouched for by an anti-clerical ex-minister of the Opportunist group, and in other constituencies there were more striking cases of Republican inter-denunciation where the rival candidates were of the same section of the party. In the Ardèche M. Jules Roche was described as the agent of the Vatican because he patronised the candidature of M. de Vogué. In the Var his former ally, M. Clemenceau, stigmatised as a clerical his Radical opponent, a Socialist town-councillor of Marseilles, whose public meetings were disturbed by interrupters brandishing crucifixes and rosaries to symbolise his unpatriotic allegiance to the Pope ; while his partisans in turn saluted M. Clemenceau when he rose to speak with cries of "Oh yes," to indicate that he was the unpatriotic agent of England. Both suggestions were equally devoid of foundation ; but nothing could be more significant of the state of party feeling in France than that two rival Radicals who wished to damage one another should bandy the charge of subservience to foreign powers, which they formerly reserved for their Reactionary opponents.

It has been worth while to consider for a moment these electioneering practices, as they display some of the causes of the failure of the parliamentary system in France. They also justify the abstention from politics of a large proportion of the worthiest citizens ; and this leads us to the consideration of a cognate subject which requires separate treatment,—the composition and character of the Chamber of Deputies under the Third Republic.

CHAPTER III

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

I

IF the earliest associations of a foreigner among French people be among that amiable class of which the leaders bear names historic before the Revolution or taken from the battle-fields of the Empire, he will hear the character of the contemporary legislators of France described in terms of such reprobation that their unrelieved scorn will probably produce the effect which exaggeration usually has on unprejudiced minds. But when he extends his inquiries beyond that curious society which lives chiefly for amusement, he will find that this is not merely the wail of reactionary impotence. The bankers, the manufacturers, and the merchants of Lyons and of Bordeaux, men whose industry and intelligence are unexcelled in any modern community, will tell him the same story in more measured language. If, however, he be warned not to trust the testimony of capitalists regarding the elect of the democracy, he may turn to another class which has in its way of life little in common with either the frivolous or the industrious phases of opulence, and he will hear the same burden from the lips of those whose work is the greatest glory of France. Masters of the French language; philosophers of widely different schools, like Renan and Taine; writers of romance who analyse the human products of their age and country; more practical economists who extol the first work of the Revolution; artists whose genius places them on a plane high above the interests of

political strife ; men of science whose instincts and education incline them to favour modern forms of government all utter the same lament. They all declare that the country which in recent times counted Guizot, Lamartine, and Thiers among its statesmen, and which more lately saw the unfulfilled promise of Gambetta, now chooses the vast majority of its parliamentary representatives from among the least worthy exponents of the life of the nation.

If the investigator have heard of the doctrine that the educated men of a community are unsafe guides in the choice of political leaders, he may, with greater difficulty, elicit the opinions of a class less accessible to a stranger than the aristocracies of intellect and of industry or the noble Faubourg. The peasantry of France has no sympathy with either of those sections of society. It forms, however, the solid fabric upon which the prosperity of the country ultimately depends, and this quality of solidity makes up for its want of ideal. If a stranger be taken into the confidence of a peasant, the latter will in the Charollais and the Beauce talk to him of his oxen and his crops ; in Saintonge and in Savoy of his vines devastated by the phylloxera ; in the Landes of the precarious living of the solitary resin-gatherer ; but the political situation is never a voluntary topic of conversation on his lips, even on the eve of an election. If his inexpansiveness be penetrated, perhaps he may be moved to vouchsafe an opinion on the deputies of his own district, in its mordant terseness more effective than the diffuser criticisms of the representatives of capital and culture. The most favourable view taken of a deputy by a rural constituent is that of a personage who has influence with the prefecture to improve the local highways ; or who, by his sign-manual, can soften the severity of the revenue officials or even of the military authorities ; or can obtain Government employment or a bureau-de-tabac for a supporter. But as these favours affect only a slender minority the ordinary peasant regards his member as a bourgeois sent by his vote to Paris to fill a lucrative situation, the profits of which are not always limited to his deputy's salary of 9000 francs,—though that is a magnifi-

cent annuity in the eyes of the toiling owner of a corner of the soil.

In the days of the Panama scandal I had frequent occasion of familiar talk in rustic by-ways with the constituents of a deputy implicated in it. The peasants of this remote district are unusually expansive and ready to converse with a stranger; but while they talked with intelligent interest, even on extra-parochial matters, the widespread imputations on the good name of their member left them indifferent, and the most definite expression of opinion I could ever elicit was, "No doubt he is as bad as the rest of them."¹ Deputies themselves recognise that, however great their individual merits, they are collectively not esteemed in the country; and that the Chamber is the object of disrespect has been testified to, within and without its walls, by the most authorised mouthpieces of the Republic. Gambetta, who occasionally let drop a phrase suggesting that if ever he came to power he would find as short a way with parliamentary government as did Oliver Cromwell, contemptuously applied the term "sous-vétérinaires" to the class of professional politicians which had begun to manifest itself.² The expression has a particular significance in France, where the practice of medicine for the ills of man and beast is associated with political aspirations rarely cherished by professors of the healing art in our country.

The phrase was revived by a Radical deputy who had had no love for its author. M. Maret, who publicly apostrophised Gambetta as "Caesar-Vitellius,"³ years later declared that the Chamber, becoming completely Republican, contained even worse material than that appraised by the potential dictator. "Gambetta's 'sous-vétérinaires,'" he said, "are glorious creatures by the side of these choice specimens sent to Parliament, not only by the villages, for which some excuse might be made, but

¹ The actual words used were "sans doute c'est une canaille comme les autres," a phrase difficult to translate, and perhaps too forcible to put in the text.

² M. Joseph Reinach, the biographer of Gambetta, informs me that the expression is not found in any of his published writings or utterances, but that it was a "boutade" frequently on his lips in private conversation, as others of his intimate friends have testified.

³ Chambre des Députés : Séance du 13 Décembre 1881.

by the towns and even by Paris; all intelligence is disappearing in an assembly which soon will be a mob of nullities."¹ Later a Radical Ministry being in office, he predicted that in the future "only those will try to enter the Chamber who have nothing to lose, or are so blemished that dirt has no terror for them, or are unfit for any other occupation, till the day when the boot of a successful soldier kicks out this imbecile Parliament."² If subsequent revelations suggested that M. Maret was an inappropriate censor of the failings of his colleagues, he was none the less for many years so esteemed a spokesman of the Republic that, as we have seen, it used its official pressure to ensure his election to the Chamber which he criticised. The new school of Radicalism is equally severe, and "pourriture de parlement," the rottenness of Parliament, is a favourite expression of the organs of the Extreme Left.

There is no need, however, to go to the violent press, Radical or Reactionary, for its exaggerated testimony; and the representatives of the Monarchical groups are obviously not impartial witnesses in this inquiry. We will also pass by the severe judgment pronounced by authoritative voices of the Left Centre, lest it should be attributed to the exclusion from office of that party. But the Opportunists have shared with the Radicals the monopoly of power since 1880, and their appreciation of the benefactors of their group is valuable. M. Salomon Reinach is chiefly known as a man of learning, but writing in the *République Française*, when his kinsman edited the journal founded by Gambetta, his name was taken as giving a party signification to his words.³ He complained that political life has by degrees

¹ Quoted by *Figaro* from *Radical*, July 21, 1893.

² *Radical*, January 24, 1896.

³ When M. Salomon Reinach's remarkable article, "L'abstention des capacités," appeared during the election period of 1893, the *République Française* was still edited by his brother, M. Joseph Reinach, the well-known deputy, some months before it passed into the hands of the Protectionists and became the organ of M. Méline. M. Zola, three years later, writing not as a man of letters scorning politics, but as a student of his race, enunciated the same opinion. "The man advanced in years who has studied the subject is offended by the mediocrity of our political world, deputies, senators, ministers, all the personnel of the governmental machine, and exclaims, What a gulf is widening between the élite of the nation and those who govern it!" (*L'élite et la Politique*, May 1896).

ceased to have attraction for the intellectual élite of the French nation, till the vast majority of parliamentary candidates are men absolutely unknown in literature, science, or the learned professions. "We are marching," said M. Reinach, "towards a state of things like that which exists in the United States, towards the formation of a narrow caste of politicians, side by side with the abstention, growing daily more complete, of thinkers and of men who make others think."

French critics may consider that I have taken needless pains in citing Republican testimony to the character of the representative Assembly under the Republic, its failings being obvious ; but a foreign observer ought not to put on record a severe appreciation of a national institution without indicating the native authorities for his judgment. This I have felt bound to do before proceeding to analyse its composition.

II

The Chamber of Deputies elected in 1893 will serve better than any other for examination, because it was chosen at a time of complete tranquillity, when no abnormal questions agitated the electorate (as was the case in 1889 and in 1898), and under unprecedented circumstances of constitutional stability,—a regime having entered its third decade of existence for the first time for a hundred years. It was, moreover, an important election, as the deputies chosen were to form the majority of the National Assembly which would name the President under whom France would pass in the ordinary course of things from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Notwithstanding these conditions the manhood of the most civilised and intelligent nation of the Continent used its franchise in a manner to sadden the hearts of believers in democratic and parliamentary institutions.

Among the 582 deputies returned one alone had a political reputation beyond the frontiers of France. M. Léon Say, illustrated an otherwise obscure assembly, till in its third session he died a private member, no place having been found for him in

any one of the twenty Cabinets which governed the country during the fourteen years preceding his death. The Institute of France was represented by only three other of its members; and the characteristic of the Chamber was that few names on its roll conveyed any idea to the average Frenchman. It was interesting to notice that a century after the Emigration the attenuated ranks of the Right contained the chiefs of branches of the houses of Rohan and of La Rochefoucauld, or that the Revolutionary families of Casimir-Périer and Cavaignac sent members to maintain their tradition of hereditary ability. But rare examples of historic association do not suffice to give prestige to a democratic assembly, and even among the numerous ex-ministers on its benches, though several were endowed with political aptitude, not one was ranked by his countrymen as a statesman or as a popular political leader. Of the men untried in office, old and young, a dozen might be cited who had displayed ability in various capacities, without however making any impression on the imagination of the nation. The most conspicuous in both categories will be incidentally mentioned in these pages.¹

The official analysis of the callings of the deputies is instructive.² France is a great commercial power, and its Parliament is perpetually engaged in proceedings of high importance to the

¹ In 1898 only half of the eight members referred to above remained in Parliament. M. Léon Say was dead, MM. Casimir-Périer and de Vogué did not stand again, and the Duc de Doudeauville (de la Rochefoucauld) was beaten. M. de Mun having been elected an Academician, the number of members of the Institute was not reduced by M. de Vogué's retirement. No parliamentary reputations were made in the Chamber of 1893-98, and among the new deputies returned at the general elections in 1898, it would be difficult to name one as a distinguished man, except perhaps M. Cruppi, a magistrate and jurist elected at Toulouse. In the very rare cases of eminent men trying to enter Parliament, they were invariably beaten. M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu was thus defeated by a Boulangist in Paris and his colleague of the Institute, M. Picot, by a Radical in the Cher. Generally speaking the defeated candidates were as obscure as the elected.

² These figures, put into round numbers, are taken, after independent verification, from the analysis of the Chambers of 1893 and of 1898, which do not greatly differ from one another, and in the case of some of the professions they are identical. They may therefore be taken as describing the composition of the Chamber in the last decade of the century, a hundred years after the Revolution. The most significant change is the steady diminution in the class representing trade and industry, while there is no corresponding increase in labour representation in spite of the advent of the new Socialist party.

national trade. Yet out of nearly six hundred deputies the connection of barely sixty can be traced with the commerce and industry of the country, and this number is only completed by counting publicans and retired commercial clerks. Half of them are "industriels" (a useful term for which an English equivalent is needed, including as it does manufacturers, coal-owners, iron-masters, cotton-spinners, and similar employers of labour); and there are a score of merchants, retail tradesmen, bankers, ship-builders, and contractors. If this be the result of the revolt of the democracy against capital, the working-classes have not sent many of their own order to champion their interests, the whole complement of labour representation being ten. Even that small number is a generous computation, as the term "ouvrier" is borne by deputies in the same inexact sense as when in election addresses they boast themselves to be "sons of peasants." The most conspicuous working-man ever returned to the Chamber was the late M. Thivrier, an innkeeper, who attended its sittings, his middle-class broadcloth concealed beneath a blue blouse. Clad in that insignia of manual toil he was often seen crossing the Pont de la Concorde, as the Palais Bourbon contains no robing-room, similar to that provided for the Bishops in the House of Lords, for legislators who sit in symbolical attire.

Nor is the agricultural population represented more adequately. Of the 38 million inhabitants of France 24 millions are classed as rural.¹ If, therefore, half the Chamber consisted of persons interested in the cultivation of the soil the proportion would not be excessive. But of 582 deputies less than forty are returned as following agricultural pursuits. If we add to them the fifty described as landed proprietors (the term indicating a more modest possession of ground than when used in our country) the ninety departments of France and Algeria send to Parliament barely one member a-piece to represent agricultural interests.

France is a land where persons who live on the interest of investments abound; yet less than fifty of the deputies are

¹ *i.e.* all the extra-urban population; cf. p. 390, note 1.

returned as of no occupation. It is a military nation ; but no more than a score of deputies have made the army or navy their calling. The clergy are free to enter the Legislature, but only two Catholic priests and one Protestant pastor sit in the Chamber.

It is the pursuit of the "liberal professions," less rigid than the Church, which most surely leads to a seat in Parliament, and more than half of the deputies are included in that vague category. The lawyers alone number 150, a hundred of them being advocates. They thus continue a tradition which high French authorities, from Napoleon to M. Taine, have declared to be the scourge of representative bodies ever since 1789, when they perorated and theorised, while at the doors of the Assembly the Revolution was turning into anarchy. The objection made by French critics to advocates as legislators is of a different nature from that expressed in England to the presence of barristers in the House of Commons, where they are deemed to regard a seat as a stepping-stone to places of profit under the Crown, reserved in abundance for members of the bar. This involves continued assiduity in the pursuit of their profession, and precisely the reverse occurs when a French advocate enters the Chamber. To begin with, there are practically no appointments in France, judicial or otherwise, for which membership of the bar is an essential qualification. Moreover, the bar is the one example of a decentralised institution in France, and nearly all its members entering the Chamber are provincial advocates, who leave their practice behind them when they come to Paris. Perhaps one in a hundred succeeds in migrating to the bar of the capital ;¹ but the ninety-nine others never hold a brief after quitting their provincial courts, and henceforth have no other calling than that of deputy. Being usually men of slender private fortune they are compelled to make politics their

¹ *e.g.* M. Waldeck-Rousseau, subsequently a senator, who was Gambetta's Minister of the Interior, was a member of the bar of Rennes when, at the age of thirty-three, he was elected deputy for that city, and later he became a leader of the Parisian bar ; but he retired from active politics to devote himself to his profession.

profession and means of livelihood. The practitioners in other branches of the law are in the same case.¹ Thus it is that the presence in the Chamber of a greater number of lawyers than of all the representatives of trade, industry, and agriculture put together, is a sure sign of the unhealthiness of the parliamentary system in France.

After the lawyers come the doctors. Including veterinary surgeons and apothecaries, they are more numerous in the Chamber than all the deputies engaged in commerce. Except that they are not rhetoricians by profession, their undue representation in Parliament is criticised on the same grounds as that of the advocates. They also have no opportunity of plying their craft in the capital when they desert their patients to serve the nation, and they furnish the most characteristic type of professional politician. In England there is no calling in which the politics of its members are less evident than in that of the country doctor. In France there are few cantons in which a medical man is not the most active politician. Far from avoiding the party strife which divides his patients, his dispensary is often a committee-room, and his round of visits an electioneering canvass which gives him an advantage over other candidates, house-to-house solicitation of votes not being usual in France.

Of the other recognised professions that of teaching is the most fertile in legislators, of whom some, like M. Dupuy, thrice Prime Minister, rise to more conspicuous heights than they would have reached had they persevered on modest academic paths. As a rule, the professor who has become deputy is not the most distinguished type of the admirable class which directs the higher instruction of France. There are usually about five-and-twenty former teachers of various grades in the Chamber. That number however includes village schoolmasters, who, in contrast to the mass of professors of secondary and superior

¹ Notaries and *avoués*, whose combined functions correspond in some respect to those of solicitors in England, are not free to practise where they please. Their number in each locality is limited, and they may only practise in the place where they are licensed, and, in the case of *avoués*, before the tribunals to which they are attached.

education, are often aggressive politicians, being appointed by the *Préfets* as agents of the Government and not by the Minister of Public Instruction.

Of professions not officially recognised that of journalism is represented by about fifty deputies, some being described as men of letters. French journalists do not occupy so high a place in the affections and respect of their countrymen as might be wished for them by members of the nation which first promoted unlicensed printing. Consequently of all the elements in the Chamber the journalistic is least likely to revive the discredited prestige of the parliamentary system in France.

A quasi-professional class are the retired functionaries, of whom forty to fifty are usually found at the *Palais Bourbon*. A few of them have served in the diplomatic body; but it is the administrative service which is most fruitful in legislators. A *préfecture* or a *sous-préfecture* is an advantageous post in which to become familiar with the political machinery and wire-pullers of a region. This was the experience of M. Bourgeois, the Radical Prime Minister, who, successively Secretary-General at *Châlons* and *Sous-Préfet* of *Reims*, established such a footing in the department of the *Marne* that it sent him to Parliament when he had had enough of administrative life.

The analysis of the callings of members of Parliament, when compared with the census returns, shows that while five-sixths of the inhabitants of France are dependent on agriculture, industry, and commerce, only one-fifth of the deputies belong to that great majority of the population. On the other hand, more than half the Chamber is composed of members of the sparse professional class.¹ So far from this being a triumph of intellect over the other forces of the community, it is certain that the popular

¹ In round figures, France has 38 million inhabitants, of whom 17½ millions are dependent on agriculture, and 13½ millions on trade and industry. In this computation are reckoned "patrons, ouvriers, employés, familles et domestiques." According to the same return less than a million of the population depend on the "liberal professions," not counting the clergy, Catholic and Protestant. It is difficult to class the ex-functionaries, as in the census returns they are not put in a separate category; but even without them, the "professional" men in the Chamber form more than half of the total number of deputies.

assembly contains few examples of the genius and talent which, together with the industry of the people, maintain France in the first rank of nations. This is a curious result of the free exercise of manhood suffrage. Moreover, after a quarter of a century of Republican government, the democracy, while refusing to elect parliamentary representatives from the élite of the nation, intellectual or industrial, chooses them, not from its own ranks, but, in the majority of cases, from among the least considered sections of the middle-class.¹

III

Opinion being practically unanimous that the composition of the Chamber is not worthy of the French nation, it is obvious that its character should be frequently attributed to universal suffrage. That theory cannot be admitted without serious qualification. If France, during the last half century, had had a continuous history, unbroken by revolution, and if from the point when manhood suffrage was substituted for a limited franchise the character of the Assembly, directly elected by the people, had deteriorated, then it might be difficult to gainsay the critics of the popular vote. But no such parliamentary evolution has taken place in France. We have to go half-way back to the Ancient Regime in order to see the results of limited franchise. No doubt when we get there we find that the parliamentarians of the Monarchy of July included some of the most illustrious men of the age. But, apart from the fiscal limitations of the franchise, the conditions of election in these later times cannot be compared with those of the days when the diligence was the swiftest means of conveyance, and the semaphore was a marvel of rapid

¹ An ingenious writer, M. Charles Benoist, has dealt with this subject since the foregoing pages were written. His figures differ slightly from mine, but his conclusions up to a certain point are the same. He, however, goes much farther than I do. He draws up a table which gives the proper proportional representation in the Chamber according to census returns. In this he works out a calculation that the "liberal professions" ought to send 13 deputies to Parliament instead of nearly 300, or if functionaries be counted in that category, they might have a total of 21 representatives. But though these tables vividly display the unrepresentative character of the Chamber, the idea of composing it in strict proportion to the occupations of the electorate is untenable.

transmission of news, which, moreover, had no cheap press for its further dissemination. Materially France under Louis Philippe had less changed since the great Revolution than it has in the same space of time which lies between these days and the middle-class Monarchy.

Still, if we go back fifty years to the last election under limited franchise, in 1846, when railways had scarcely begun to cover the surface of France, and if we compare the lists of the final Orleanist Chamber with that of the Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage after the Revolution of 1848 this is what we find. There was actually an increase in the number of distinguished names in that revolutionary body, elected after the most prodigious reform that ever took place in parliamentary institutions in any country, a register of 240,000 electors being displaced by one of about nine millions.¹ Naturally, the suddenness of the change produced a period of disorder. But we are not examining the popular effects of improvised reform. We are looking at the electoral results of unlimited franchise; and the second act of universal suffrage was to name Louis Napoleon President of the Republic on December 10, 1848. Its next work was the election of the Legislative Assembly in May 1849, which also abounded in eminent names. Its succeeding acts were the Plebiscite of December 1851, consecrating the Coup d'État, and in 1852 the vote for the proclamation of the Empire. It may be mentioned that at the Plebiscite approving the Coup d'État a larger number of votes were recorded than at

¹ The number of electors inscribed on the lists for the election of the Constituent Assembly in April 1848 was 8,220,000, but by the end of the year, for the election of President of the Republic they had increased to nearly 10 millions, or only half a million fewer than they are at the end of the century. Tocqueville said of the results of the elections of April 1848, "à l'exception de M. Thiers qui avait échoué, du Duc de Broglie qui ne s'était pas présenté, et de MM. Guizot et Duchâtel qui étaient en fuite, tous les orateurs célèbres et la plupart des parleurs connus de l'ancien monde politique étaient là."—*Souvenirs d'A. de Tocqueville*, c. 5. He points out that in addition to these the Constituent Assembly contained a much greater number of large landowners and gentlemen of birth than the last Chamber of Louis Philippe, as well as a numerous group of ecclesiastics. He also describes his own election in the Manche, where his family property was, and how the Norman peasantry marched with him to the poll quite in patriarchal fashion.

any general election under the Third Republic.¹ No doubt inconsistency may be imputed to manhood suffrage at this period, when, in 1848, it named a Republican Assembly, in 1849 one in which the Royalists prevailed, and two years later signified to Louis Bonaparte that he had done right in depriving France of the services of the elect of popular franchise. But inconsistent as were these successive acts of universal suffrage, it had shown little sign that its representatives would be inferior to those elected by a handful of the population. However, manhood suffrage decided to surrender to the dictator, whom it had set up, its free selection of delegates, and the Empire, which was its creation, developed the system of official candidature aided by official pressure. But when universal suffrage began to weary of the autocracy it had established, it did not assert itself by sending to the Corps Législatif a band of unknown lawyers and apothecaries. It chose, to represent it in opposition, the eloquence of Jules Favre and the authority of Thiers, or sought out the rising genius of Gambetta.

The Empire fell, and the elections terminating the war, which had swept it away, produced an Assembly which showed that universal suffrage was capable of choosing worthy representatives at an hour of national crisis. Since the meeting of the States-General in 1789 there had never been seen in France an Assembly, legislative or constituent, containing so many men of distinction, whether of past political prestige, of rising promise, of culture, of rank, or of fortune, as that which met at Bordeaux in 1871. The names of the Duc d'Aumale, M. Thiers, Mgr. Dupanloup, Generals Chanzy and Changarnier, the Prince de Joinville, MM. Jules Simon, Léon Say, Gambetta, de Broglie, and Jules Favre, give some idea of the high character of the men of opposed parties and opinions which the democracy chose

¹ If it be thought that the enormous poll in favour of Louis Napoleon after the days of December 1851 was due to pressure, that cannot be imputed to the vote which made him President of the Republic in 1848; yet on that occasion a larger number of electors voted than at the general election of 1893, though there were nearly half a million more voters on the register in the latter year than in December 1848.

at that critical hour. The Chamber of Deputies of a quarter of a century later is in every respect an inferior body ; but its deterioration cannot be traced to its origin in democratic suffrage. The Lower House of the Constitution of 1875, which has brought discredit on parliamentary institutions, is chosen by the same franchise as the respectable assemblies of the Second Republic, as the autocratic regime of Louis Napoleon, and as the distinguished Legislature of 1871.

It is necessary to dwell on this point, as there is an excessive tendency to ascribe to the admission of the people to the suffrage the deterioration of tone in political circles as well as other evils which afflict modern society. In our own country the decadence of the House of Commons is a favourite theme ; but when its critics attribute the alleged decline to the extension of the franchise, they would do well to meditate on Mill's well-known criticism on certain passages of Tocqueville.¹ The French philosopher, he said, confounded the effects of democracy with the effects of civilisation, binding up in an abstract idea the whole of the tendencies of modern commercial society, and giving them one name—democracy ; thereby letting it be supposed that he ascribed to equality of conditions several of the effects naturally arising from the mere progress of national prosperity. Now if it be true that the composition and the tone of the House of Commons have deteriorated, that change would seem to be due not to the approximate "equality of conditions" established by Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone in the extension of the franchise, but to the fact that the popular Chamber reflects "the tendencies of modern commercial society."

An incident which pointed to the decline of the standard of the House of Commons in the last decade of the century was the pugilistic fray with which certain members enlivened a sitting. If I mention it, it is because I was a witness of the dismay it caused in France among the old parliamentarians who revere English institutions as a pattern for all nations. When our

¹ *Dissertations, etc.* ed. 1859, vol. ii. ; *M. de Tocqueville on Democracy in America.*

members belaboured one another before the eyes of scandalised Europe, it was not because they were no longer the elect of ten-pound householders and the like. It was because they were the exponents of the new school of manners which is the outcome, not of the extension of political privileges, but of the levelling influence of the diffusion of wealth ; or as Mill puts it, of "the progress of national prosperity." In the days of limited franchise there sat in the House of Commons a retired prize-fighter, whose science would have been welcome on that ardent day of 1893. He was not the elect of the populace but was member for a small rural borough¹ which, though enjoying a wider franchise than certain other villages, was an undemocratic constituency compared with Westminster, the representatives of whose scot-and-lot electors, from Charles James Fox to John Stuart Mill, were not conspicuous for their plebeian rudeness.

It is possible that if the sittings of the House of Lords were long enough to try the tempers of the peers, they might show similar symptoms of the spirit of the age ; for though independent of popular franchise, they are not less amenable to the influences of civilisation. We need not draw our examples from the undistinguished money-makers, too abundantly raised to the peerage by both parties. If we take the case of one whose family has been considerable from the days of the Tudors or Stuarts, it is evident that a noble lord who rides on a bicycle, made by a company of which he is director, is relatively an inferior creature to his ancestor who drove down to the House in a coach, wearing his star. It is certain that to foreigners he gives smaller superficial proof of England's greatness when he travels to Monte Carlo in a sleeping-car between a tourist from Chicago and a book-maker, than did his grandfather, whose post-chaise, clattering over the pavements of Burgundy and Dauphiny, impressed the French peasantry with the grandeur of an English milord, and whetted the cupidity of Fra Diavolo. But the bicycle and the board of directors are not the products of democracy. They are,

¹ Mr. Gully the prize-fighter was member for Pontefract, where the franchise was based on burgage tenure.

like the international express, the professional visits of the betting-man to the Mediterranean, and the ubiquity of the American citizen, signs of the progress of civilisation.

Thus it is that pessimists idealise our middle-class representative system of the first half of the Victorian epoch, forgetting that the parliament of those days reflected the abnormally refined society of a period of transition. To a series of uncultivated old kings had succeeded a young Queen, who had chosen for consort her equal in intelligence and elevation of ideas. Society took its tone from the admirable Court, which seemed to preside over an age of peace and of scientific enterprise. The introduction of railways and of cheap postage marked a new era. The fine manners of days when means of communication were slow still lingered amid modern improvements; while the coarse features of Georgian life were repressed by the example of the sovereign, whose influence was felt in every class throughout the land. If the downfall of the Orleans dynasty in 1848 had had a similar influence in England to that of the Revolution of July, which expedited the Reform Bill of 1832, and had then produced another extension of the franchise, the English Parliament would not have forthwith assumed the manners and practices which distress its critics at the century's end. It might have contained a few more reformers of the type of Mr. Bright and of Mr. Cobden, a few more radicals of the type of Mr. Tom Duncombe; while the brilliant author of *Sybil* might have altered the plot of his stories, and undertaken the education of the Chartists. But that the volumes of Hansard would have suddenly lost their slimness from a premature outbreak of the diseases which latterly have swollen them, is as improbable as that quotations of Horace and other tokens of leisured decorum would have survived in the House to our uncourtly days, had a limited franchise been retained.

To the French a most impressive sign of the stability of British institutions is that, whatever the decadence of Parliament, it delegates the supreme leadership under extended suffrage to persons of precisely the same class as when the franchise was

limited. Mr. Disraeli they decline to regard as the product either of English democracy or of English civilisation ; to them he is an alien accident in national history as was Mazarin in France. But Mr. Gladstone, they point out, was of the same social caste and of the same academical association as Canning and Peel. Lord Salisbury, whose rule has been the chief tangible result of the further extension of the franchise, is the head of a family which was high in the State when the ancestors of Walpole and of Chatham were obscure. Lord Rosebery, the first of the new order of Radical Prime Ministers, in origin and in tastes resembles Lord Palmerston without that statesman's popular attribute of a seat in the Lower House ; while in that Chamber the advanced democrats have been led by Sir William Harcourt, whose birth and tradition would have entitled him to high place in the days of Rockingham and Shelburne. The twentieth century may entrust the lead of both parties to politicians of different antecedents ; but we have reached its verge without experiencing in that respect¹ any marked change from the epochs when Mr. Pitt was brought into Parliament for Appleby and Mr. Gladstone for Newark.

Thus we see that the unworthy composition of the French Chamber, and the alleged decadence of Parliament in England, are not due to the possession of the franchise by the democracy. The moment the principle of popular government is conceded it is difficult to vindicate any restrictions on manhood suffrage. An absolute monarchy, a military despotism, a constitutional oligarchy can all be defended. Under the first France became great ; under the second it repaired the damage done at the upsetting of the first ; under the third England kept her monarchs in order, and thereby won the admiration of French philosophers. But the system we tried from 1832 was defensible only as a transitory expedient to avoid sudden change, and perhaps as a necessary method of educating by degrees the people to select its delegates.

¹ Mr. W. H. Smith, though leader of the House of Commons, was not a party leader except in the sense in which that term could be applied to the Duke of Richmond, who was likewise the leader of a House.

Both parties in the State being agreed that the putting of artificial limits on the franchise of the Third Estate ought to go the way of the pocket boroughs, it is a pity that manhood suffrage seems to be for ever unattainable in England—on the one hand maimed by the disingenuous vexations of our registration laws, on the other menaced

Amazoniâ securi.¹

But perfection is not found in human institutions ; so while our nation, endowed with parliamentary instinct, complicates its franchise with costly restrictions, the French, with their admirably simple system of establishing the right to vote, have, under the Third Republic, no sense how to use it. It is in this defect that we must look for the causes why the representation of the people in the Chamber is not satisfactory.

IV

When the manhood of a nation is invested with the suffrage, the faculty of voting only becomes a force if it is directed and organised. The most obvious form of organisation is that which has for its end plebiscite or referendum :²—that is to say, the acclamation in a community, by the majority of voices, of a man to whom is delegated the supreme power, or the approval or disapproval by that majority of a definite act or policy of the Government. There is no English equivalent for those technical terms ; but the process which they connote has, in modified form, crept into usage in our country with the later extensions of the

¹ Hor. *Carm.* IV. iv. 20.

² I have used the two words in their respective modern significations, but before the Revolution, *plébiscite* was used by Voltaire to describe the popular vote now called referendum, which then as now was taken on public questions in Switzerland, " Dans l'ancienne Rome, et même encore à Genève et à Bâle et dans les petits cantons ce sont les plébiscites qui font les lois."—*Lettre d'Argental*, 30 Mars 1776. Montesquieu seems to be chiefly responsible for the word, for the Latin origin of which there is little classical authority. Its modern technical usage dates from the votes of 1851 and 1852 in favour of Louis Napoleon. French advocates of the referendum disclaim its plebiscitary tendency. They say that whereas a plebiscite is the abdication of the powers of universal suffrage to the hands of one man, the referendum is the permanent power to exercise the national sovereignty. All the same, referendum would inevitably lead to plebiscite in France. See pp. 571-72 and note.

franchise, a framework being ready prepared for them to work upon in the old system of party government. For a quarter of a century after the Reform Bill of 1867 the elections were plebiscitary in character, the electorate having to decide whether Mr. Gladstone should administer the government of the country or criticise its administration. The election after his withdrawal from public life partook more of the nature of referendum, no name of equal magnitude being before the electors, who were called upon rather to pronounce for or against the policy of Irish Home Rule.

Although an election by constituencies, unlike a plebiscite in its strict sense, is affected in places by local and personal questions, it evokes the general voice of the British nation for or against a party and a policy, usually incarnated in a leader. Thus the country is divided into two political armies, each striving for the mastery. One of the aids to success is that candidates should be at the disposal of the two parties possessing qualities, such as public repute or promise, or local popularity,¹ likely to captivate the floating mass of opinion which in Great Britain, under the party system, periodically turns a minority into a majority. If the two parties were to be broken up into independent groups, a disaster of which presages have not been wanting, the standard of the House of Commons would descend beneath that of the actual state of society. It would become, not more democratic in the proper sense of the term, for it would be less representative of large masses of the population, but more obscure. The labour of candidature, already uninviting, would lose its recompense in ceasing to confer membership of one or other of the great parties, which, despite modern modifications, are the depositaries of constitutional tradition. Even in a country where the title of

¹ A new evil menacing political representation in England has no counterpart in France, for the very reason of the small prestige of the Legislature—the importation of rich and obscure strangers to contest constituencies. The *Times*, in a wise article after the loss of a safe Conservative seat “through the revulsion of popular feeling against such a prostitution,” commenting on this subservience to plutocracy, perhaps the gravest danger threatening modern societies, described it as “a form of corruption more subtle, though scarcely less demoralising, than that which prevailed in the old rotten boroughs.”—*Times*, February 4, 1897.

Member of Parliament is respectable by the sentiment of centuries, its prestige would not survive parliamentary anarchy.

Thus in France, where no Constitution has lasted long enough to make membership of the Legislature of itself a position of distinction, the parliamentary system is fated to fail till it is fortified by its essential complement, the party system. Of this there is no prospect, and it can only be approached when an election has a quasi-plebiscitary character, dividing the electorate into two camps. That of February 1871, during the armistice after the capitulation of Paris, is the only one under the Third Republic which fully satisfied that condition. The question before the vanquished nation was the continuance of the war or the conclusion of peace, and the electorate, having issues graver to think about than jealousies of factions, chose an Assembly worthy of the solemn crisis to liberate the territory by peaceful means. It would seem from subsequent history that nothing less than a victorious invasion would prevent the political representatives of France from breaking up into groups. For a moment after the Seize Mai the country seemed again to be ranged in two parties. But the three groups of Reactionaries combined to oppose the Republicans without coalescence,—the Orleanists waiting for the Comte de Chambord's death to overwhelm the Legitimists, and the Bonapartists counting on the maturing promise of the Prince Imperial to wreck the two Bourbon factions. On the other side the Republican majority was not only divided into Moderates and Radicals; but the death of M. Thiers having marked out Gambetta as the chief to unite the sections of the party, his pre-eminence provoked jealousy instead of unity, and new divisions instead of coalition. Thus the spirit of group, destined never to quit the Republic, pervaded the fateful elections of 1877, and the lists of deputies then returned, in contrast to those of the Assembly of 1871, are filled with barren names. Some of the older men no doubt had gone to the Senate, but the meagre achievement of the younger stock explains Gambetta's discerning scorn for the elect of the new Republic.¹

¹ See p. 383.

Gambetta professed that *scrutin-de-liste* would produce a better class of members. He said that the obscure local candidate who, by the good graces of village wire-pullers, wins the suffrages of a smaller single-member constituency, would be eliminated from the lists prepared by party magnates, and that they would select for the deputation of the department a series of names to do the party credit. The party system, which perhaps Gambetta dreamed of, needs no such artificial means to fortify it; and tried when he was dead, *scrutin-de-liste* realised none of the hopes founded on it. It gave some advantage to the Reactionaries, the deaths of the Comte de Chambord and of the Prince Imperial having made them more compact. Otherwise it did not affect the composition of the Chamber, and under it the average duration of ministries actually decreased, proving that the chaos of groups was unremedied. The supervision of the character of candidates presented to departments presumes a strong party organisation at headquarters and strong leaders to direct it. But in France, if a politician display the essential qualities of a party leader and a capacity to impose his will on his followers the cry of Dictator is raised. Thus, whatever the system of election, the candidature of those who represent the best elements of the nation is not encouraged.

Thoughtful Frenchmen whose instincts are Republican, distressed at the failure of the parliamentary system under the Republic, search for reasons to explain the unworthy composition of the representative Chamber. Most of the unsatisfactory features in French parliamentary institutions may be traced to the absence of the party system which is essential to their working; and the chronic inability of the French to produce that system is in itself a sure sign of their incapacity for parliamentary government. It may, however, be interesting to consider some of the specific hindrances to the candidature and election of creditable representatives of the nation.

We have seen what a power in provincial politics are the local committees known by different names in different regions. These committees, whether in country towns or in villages, are

not composed of labourers and artisans. They are managed by petty functionaries, by small professional men, and by "petits rentiers"—an unoccupied class consisting for the most part of persons of similar station to retired tradesmen in England, who, however, in many cases have never followed a calling, having inherited a competency often increased by a dowry of like dimensions and origin. The café is the usual meeting-place of these citizens, and the municipal council their first field of operations. If they can get possession of it their influence, which increases in proportion to the size of the commune, becomes considerable in the canton. They name the senatorial electors of their municipality, and they have to be reckoned with in the elections for the departmental and district councils.

It is interesting to observe the upward progress of a local politician. If he be a lawyer or a doctor the first sign of his ambition is a willingness to give gratuitous consultations to his neighbours; and for such an one to have demanded fees for professional service is sometimes revived as a reproach when he has attained greatness.¹ He has also to cultivate the social qualities appreciated by the frequenters of the political houses of call. In a commune which I know well, the village doctor was reputed the finest billiard-player that ever entered the "Pêche Miraculeuse," the headquarters of the local angling society² of which he was honorary president. The aged and the sick lamented that having independent means he rarely took the trouble to visit a patient till the certificate of decease was required; yet he was popular with the robust clients of the

¹ The *Figaro* of March 26, 1896, published a violent attack on a minister in the Bourgeois Cabinet who had been a doctor in the Charente Inférieure, based on a printed missive, come to light, which he had circulated among his patients threatening legal proceedings if they did not pay him his outstanding fees. The minister in question was a senator, and the suggestion was made that had he been a deputy and compelled to solicit the popular suffrage every four years there would have been no question of the legal summons.

² It is curious that the blameless pursuit of angling should in France be associated with the least attractive phases of political life. During the Toulouse election enquiry, referred to in a previous chapter, it came to light that the chief agency of corruption in that city was the "Société confraternelle des pêcheurs à la ligne," of which the president was one Cantécór, a Gascon hero only less celebrated than his colleague Mascaras.

cabarets. He was thus the grand elector of the municipal council. It was to his house that the deputy came when he visited the commune, and, should that legislator ever be elevated to the Senate, the faculty of medicine may perhaps add to its long parliamentary roll the name of this rural practitioner. Meanwhile he and such as he have a large proportion of the representation of the people in their hands. The consequent disadvantage is not merely that men of refinement and intellect who would like to enter the Legislature shrink from the necessity of courting these local notables, but these magnates have an equal distaste for any one above their own level.¹ Thus it is that manhood suffrage gets the discredit of the composition of the Chamber, with which it has little more directly to do than in the days when the Imperial Government dictated to the people whom it should elect. In both cases the people might have asserted itself; but then as now the population of France showed by its attitude that, no matter what regime it submits to, it is not apt to exercise the privileges of parliamentary government.

Even if the local notables were disposed to favour candidates of distinction or of promise, the latter would not thereby be absolved from experiences trying even for politicians not over-fastidious. Thus M. Salomon Reinach, already cited, attributes the abstention of capable men to "the increasing brutality of electioneering practices." Such are the tumultuous and unseemly incidents at public meetings which we have glanced at on a former page; the abject character of electioneering literature,

¹ cf. M. Taine's description of the political situation which followed the work of the Constituent Assembly in 1789-90:—"In each village there are five or six of those for whom politics has become a career in which they seek their personal advantage, in each market town twenty or thirty, in each city several hundreds. They are the real active citizens. They alone give all their time and attention to public affairs, corresponding with the journals and the deputies in Paris, holding private committees, summoning public meetings, drawing up motions and addresses, spying on and denouncing local magistrates, starting and patronising candidates, beating up votes in the by-ways. In reward for this labour they have the power," etc. M. Taine concludes the passage by comparing this phase of the Revolution with the situation in the United States of to-day (*Revolution*, t. 1, livre 2, ch. 3).

in which a candidate finds every intimate detail of his private life lampooned, and so has to retaliate with like poisoned weapons; the unedifying coarseness of journalistic polemics, which, as we have seen, is not attenuated even in the rare case where a candidate is an Academician. These excuses would not be adequate if the position of deputy were a prize worth winning; for violence is not characteristic of all the contested elections throughout France, very many, as we have observed, being conducted amid the profound indifference of the population. Moreover, in the period which French Liberals regard as the ideal epoch of English parliamentarism, outrage, both physical and literary, was a normal incident of our elections, braved by the scholars and gentlemen who sought to enter the House of Commons after the first Reform Act. Indeed the description left by Dickens of electoral humours of that day, stripped of caricature and transferred to a French scene with its necessary local colouring, might serve to illustrate the incidents of certain elections under the Third Republic. It is an example of the complete contrast between the two countries, that in the kingdom of Louis Philippe elections under a limited franchise produced none of the violence then practised under similar circumstances on the English side of the Channel; while with extension of the franchise has come a softening of the rudeness of electoral manners in Great Britain, though the French are lamenting their deterioration under manhood suffrage.

The prevalence in election contests of incidents offensive to good taste would have little terror to men of worth if a seat in the Chamber of Deputies were held in high esteem, and if it afforded an honest patriot more opportunity of serving his country than he would find in developing his business or pursuing his studies. It is useless to analyse each explanation given of the abstention of the best men of the nation from politics, because they are nearly all derived from one source, the unsuitableness of the parliamentary system to the genius of the French nation. No doubt the mud on the paths which lead to the Palais Bourbon has a deterrent effect on some who would like

to go thither if the road were cleaner ; but it is only one of a multitude of obstacles.

The situation was summed up to me by an employer of labour whose popularity among all classes in a populous district I had opportunity of judging. A small functionary of the State had, in extolling to me this good man's qualities, observed that if he would take the trouble to come forward as candidate he could defeat the sitting member. He added significantly, that being in the service of the Government he would not have dared to make that reflection on a deputy to any one but a foreigner. The neighbour he had thus ventured to praise was of a family which during the Second Empire had been in opposition. They were Orleanists of the old revolutionary school who regarded as a betrayal of their principles the submission of the Comte de Paris to the Comte de Chambord, in whom they saw the incarnation of the subsequent clerical policy of the *Seize Mai*. My friend therefore had accepted the Republic without reserve, if without enthusiasm, before the Papal Encyclical had driven unwilling Monarchists into the governmental fold. This being his position, in discussing with me the suggestion of the humble official he discoursed somewhat as follows :—

"If I stood as a moderate Republican I should probably be returned by a small majority. In this canton I should poll nearly all the votes, both of the industrial population and of the peasants round about, who owe their prosperity to the industries I have founded. In the other parts of the division I should get the votes of the Left Centre Republicans, and also of the Reactionaries (who are not numerous in this department), excepting those of a few extreme Royalists who pray for the conversion of the Pope since his Republican encyclicals. All the clergy too would support me ; but their aid would bring me little more than their own suffrages. The *Sous-Préfecture* with its official influence I should have against me, as there is scarcely a place in the *arrondissement* not filled by one of the nominees of the sitting deputy. In spite of that I could turn the probability of being elected into a certainty if I took the trouble

to cultivate half a dozen lawyers, doctors, and journalists who command the majority in their cantons—a price I would not pay even if I wished to enter the Chamber. But I do not wish to enter it, for my own sake and for the sake of the people who would send me there. For nine months of the year I should have to be constantly in Paris; and unless I neglected my affairs here it would entail fifteen or even thirty hours a week spent in the trains, which are not rapid on branch lines in France. During those nine months I should witness usually two changes of Ministry; and the votes which I gave in the divisions determining the crisis would alone have any influence on the affairs of the country. That would be the chief result of leaving my workpeople and my enterprises in the hands of managers. Minor consequences would be that I should be vilified and blackmailed in the journals. I should be accused of selling my vote or of buying my seat. If there were a fatal accident at my works the Socialist organs would hold me up as an assassin. If my wife were invited to the Rothschilds', the anti-Semites would attack her in coarse terms, and tell the priests here that they were risking their souls in voting for an apostate. Such inducements do not tempt me to neglect not only my business, but the hospital, the schools, and the other institutions we have founded here. Moreover, I am mayor of the commune where my château is; there is a doctor who would like my place, and, with his election, politics would introduce their baneful influence in the municipality. Then again, if I were firmly established as a Republican deputy, with no suspicion of being a Reactionary, I should become the protector of all the petty functionaries in the district. Instead of living at peace among my own people, from morning to night I should be beset by official applications and official visits. There would be the road-mender who had to complain of the road-inspector; the road-inspector who had a grievance against the Sous-Préfet; the Sous-Préfet who wrote to denounce a postmistress; the postmistress who had tales to tell about the judge of her canton; the Juge-de-Paix who had an unfavourable report to make about the conduct of a mayor; the

mayor who desired the removal of the village schoolmaster; and the schoolmaster who wanted the violet ribbon of the Academic Palms for his button-hole on the 14th of July;—to say nothing of solicitations for promotion, for nomination, and for protection. It is this part of a deputy's existence which is particularly pleasing to men like the sitting member, who was a small lawyer practising in the provincial courts, or like our doctor, who wants to make the municipal council a stepping-stone to a higher place. But for people of my condition, as indeed for all men of refined feeling, whether wealthy or not, this function of petty local tyrant, of agent of political jobbery, co-operating with a band of obscure wire-pullers, is an odious feature of parliamentary life, and is a powerful cause for deterring the fittest from entering it."

This prerogative of dispensing the patronage of the central Government vested in a deputy is most distasteful to all excepting those who abuse it.¹ It is the inevitable result of the union of two incompatibles, a centralised bureaucracy and parliamentary government. The machine constructed by Napoleon was intended to be regulated by strong and arbitrary hands; and one reason of the failure of the parliamentary system in France is that it finds itself in unnatural combination with another system which is its contradiction. It is useless to argue that it is the fault of centralised government which ought to be reformed away so as to give free scope to representative institutions. Centralisation, which flourished under the Old Regime, rose again out of the Revolution, and has been unaffected by the upheavals of this

¹ It will be generally conceded that, with rare exceptions, English members of Parliament, whether in or out of office, have in later times acquired a distaste for what is called patronage. A minister most frequently regards his right of nomination to places of profit as a nuisance which he gladly delegates to his private secretary or to his permanent subordinates. A usage existed of delegating to local members the nomination to certain situations in the gift of the Postmaster-General, and in 1895 the House of Commons passed a resolution that the nominations thus made by the Treasury on the recommendation of members of Parliament should be transferred to the Postmaster-General. The *Journal des Débats* thought the feelings of the English legislators who passed this self-denying ordinance so curious and so laudable that it devoted an article to it, holding up for special admiration the utterance of a member who declared that the exercise of patronage by members was a disagreeable duty which created more enemies than friends. "Voilà un bel exemple de désintéressement parlementaire," exclaimed the organ of the Left Centre (February 21, 1895).

century. It will likewise survive all future changes in store for France, because it suits the temperament of the French, who are not a parliamentary nation. Plebiscite they understand, and government by bureaucracy they understand ; but parliamentary government they never will comprehend. This is the cause of their passive delegation of electoral powers to local coteries, composed of the least worthy and the least disinterested elements of the population. Consequently the result of their legislative elections is not the spontaneous voice of the nation, save at abnormal times like 1871, when amid invasion there was no time or place for committees to spring up and take possession of the electorate.

V

One cause which might be adduced of the quality of the French legislators is the system of payment of members ; but I do not think that it can so be considered. The principle that members of the Legislature should be remunerated is now as rooted in French minds as is in ours the idea that ministers should be salaried ; and there is no abstract reason which would sanction the one and interdict the other. From the Revolution, when in August 1789 the Duc de Liancourt proposed to the National Assembly that deputies should be allowed an "indemnity" for their travelling expenses and the cost of their sojourn in the capital, the remuneration has been officially called by that name and regarded as such rather than as a salary. Under the Consulate and the First Empire the tradition of the Revolution, of which those regimes were the later chapters, was maintained ; and the delegates, who corresponded to members of the Legislature under parliamentary government, were paid. The Restoration allowed no emoluments to deputies, and the Monarchy of July continued that policy. As the gifted generation which matured between the battle of Waterloo and the Revolution of 1848 produced the most notable series of parliamentary orators ever heard in France, the coincidence of the period of gratuitous membership with that of parliamentary excellence might seem to be one of cause and

effect. But as we saw in examining the effects of extended franchise, it is not possible to take one usage of a far-off epoch and attribute to it all the characteristics of the day. The men of July were renowned parliamentarians because the marvellous renaissance after the barren season of the Revolutionary wars had inspired the French race with every intellectual faculty, original and imitative. The peculiar genius of the epoch thus succeeded for a brief season in transplanting to French soil a brilliant imitation of the British Parliament, of which one of the features was the gratuitous service of members. But the receipt of a salary would not in those days have altered the character of their assemblies any more than it would have prolonged the life of an experiment as unsuited to the French temperament as it was interesting.

After the Revolution of 1848 the Provisional Government re-established the salary. The Constitution of the end of that year consecrated the principle in a clause which decreed that no representative of the people was competent to refuse it. Between the Coup d'État of 1851 and the proclamation of the Second Empire the gratuitous system was tried, but as soon as Louis Napoleon became Emperor the salary was restored by the Senatus Consultum of December 1852.¹ The National Assembly elected in 1871 at the end of the War came into existence by a decree calling into operation the electoral law of 1849, which fixed the annual emolument at 9000 francs. At that sum it has remained, there never having been any question of abolishing it even when the Assembly contained a majority of wealthy Reactionaries.²

It is as futile to conjecture what would be the effect of the

¹ At first under the Empire a deputy's salary was 2500 francs (£100) a month during the session, but in 1866 the fixed annual sum of 12,500 francs (£500) was substituted. The senators are relatively much less favourably treated by the Republic; they receive, like the deputies, 9000 francs a year instead of 30,000 under the Imperial regime, when they were nominated.

² The Commission of the National Assembly in 1875, which recommended that deputies should receive an indemnity, proposed that senators should not be paid; but the Assembly passed an amendment extending the salary to members of the Upper Chamber, the Republicans being reinforced in voting it by a number of Monarchists, chiefly of the Orleanist party, including the Prince de Joinville and the Duc d'Audiffret Pasquier (Ass. Nat. Fév. 1875).

withdrawal of the salary on the character of candidates and of deputies as to enter into similar speculations on the possible results of the limitation of the suffrage. As long as parliamentary institutions exist in France, whatever their form or their powers, under Republic, Empire, or Monarchy, universal suffrage will be the basis for the election of the members who will not be permitted to serve without emolument. It does not, however, seem likely that the general character of the legislators would under present circumstances be materially changed if the salary were abolished. We have seen that while the deputies do not by their condition, with rare exceptions, represent the wealth, the commerce, or the culture of the country, neither do they represent the peasantry, the artisans, and the poorer classes. The doctors and the lawyers who commence their candidature by offering gratuitous consultations are not penniless persons. The class from which the majority of members are recruited would, in England, if taken away from its nominal professions, have no means of sustenance. That is not the case in France, and though the £360 which a deputy annually receives as salary usually increases his revenue by a very considerable proportion, the instances are rare where it forms his entire income. It is not by artificial means that the level of a representative Assembly is elevated or lowered; and the most valid objection to the payment of members seems to be the additional burden which their combined salaries throw upon the taxpayer.

The primary cause of the unrepresentative character of the French Chamber—for that is the real signification of its unsatisfactory composition—is that there is no motive power latent among the French which could ever be so directed as to make them apt for parliamentary government. It is, however, not surprising that French admirers of constitutional government should recall with regret the glorious days of French parliamentarism, when M. Thiers, whose fame was first made with his pen as the historian of the Revolution, declared, "Writing is nothing; I would give ten of the best histories that were ever written for one good session"; and Lamartine, in his enthusiasm

for politics, cried, "I regret the unhappy notoriety of the verses I composed in the indolence of my youth, for my real vocation is politics." But M. Thiers was soon to be banished from Parliament to resume his studies, and the poet, trespassing on the historical as well as the political domain of the statesman, was one of the chief destroyers of the parliamentary Monarchy of July,¹ hastening its last days by his sentimental glorification of the men of the Convention.

It was during that period of ephemeral brilliancy that Tocqueville visited America, and, impressed with the high character of the statesmen then ruling France,² he wrote, "On my arrival in the United States I was struck with surprise on discovering how common was a high degree of merit among the governed, and how rare it was among the governing." If the illustrious philosopher could have survived to visit that country at the end of the century he would have had to develop his reflection, had he still seen fit to make it, by clearly defining the terms *governed* and *governing*, as sixty years ago the unofficial rule of plutocracy in America had not yet begun.³ If, however, a

¹ The "chères études" of M. Thiers formed a standing joke at his expense. Though the above observation made in the latter days of the July Monarchy accurately expressed his belief in himself as a leader of men, after his enforced removal from affairs he used to profess a preference for the literary studies to which he was exiled. After recovering power he kept up the fiction, and when called as the first witness before the Commission on the Government of la Défense Nationale (Séance du 17 Sept. 1871), he began by describing the reluctance with which at the elections of 1863 he quitted his "études préférées" for the Corps Législatif. Another version of Lamartine's enthusiastic exclamation is found in the *Notes inédites de M. Duvergier de Houranne*, quoted by Thureau Dangin, *Histoire de la Monarchie de Juillet*, vol. v. c. 3.

² There is a letter of his written to Nassau Senior a short time after the publication of his *Démocratie en Amérique*, quoted in Thureau Dangin's *Monarchie de Juillet* (vol. ii. c. 15), dated January 1836, shortly before the separation of Guizot and Thiers, displaying a serene confidence in the future stability of affairs as the result of the statesmanship of the first six years of the reign of Louis Philippe. After the fall of the Monarchy of July, Tocqueville, having in the meanwhile been a deputy, modified his opinion of the character and ability of the politicians who had done nothing to prevent the Revolution of 1848.

³ The opening sentences of the *Démocratie en Amérique* are instructive to read in these days of monopolies and trusts and railway kings: "Parmi les objets nouveaux qui pendant mon séjour aux États Unis ont attiré mon attention, aucun n'a plus vivement frappé mes regards que l'égalité des conditions. . . . Bientôt je reconnus que ce même fait étend son influence fort au delà des mœurs politiques et des lois" (Introduction, ed. 1836). Again, later in the work he

foreigner of his position came to France to study the nation under the Third Republic, the high degree of merit among the governed would probably not on his first arrival strike him as forcibly as would its rarity among the governing. During the early period of his studies in Paris, when he turned from contemplating the failure of the parliamentary system, he would behold a society given up to frivolity, and not offering that check to political scandal in the power of a conspicuous minority, which by its life and manners affords a decent, intelligent, and dignified example. But by degrees he would perceive that though the world of fashion had no relations with that of politics, it was equally unreflective of the national character; and that the vast majority of the governed were immeasurably worthier than the politicians whom they allowed to govern them. Moreover, outside the trifling circles of the capital, in worthier sections of society and among the general public, he would find a complete indifference as to the movements in the political world and the identity of its actors, though at no period in the century has greater interest been taken in the personal attributes of men of mark.

French politicians were not always thus neglected. Without going back to the exceptional epoch of Louis Philippe, we know that after the Franco-German war not only was the spare figure of the venerable survivor of that age, M. Thiers, familiar to all his countrymen, but the burly form of Gambetta, whose whole fame was made and ended in a dozen years, was equally well known. Since then the art of reproducing human features has progressed, as has also the taste of the public for details regarding the private life and habits of persons whose lineaments they recognise. But this modern species of renown is now denied

remarks, "Si l'on me demandait où je place l'aristocratie américaine, je répondrais sans hésiter que ce n'est point parmi les riches, qui n'ont aucun lieu commun qui les rassemble" (vol. ii. c. 8). Neither philosophers nor economists who went from Europe to study the United States on the eve of the railway era seem to have anticipated the peculiar social, economical, and political results about to be produced, or the political and social reign of the capitalist. Michel Chevalier visited America about the same time as Tocqueville, and his only predictions as to the consequences of the introduction of railways in the United States were that they would open up the unexplored continent, and would guarantee the maintenance of the Confederation (*Intérêts matériels en France*, 1838).

to the parliamentary rulers of France. The frequenter of the Boulevards knows by sight many a celebrity never seen in Paris. He notes the new costume of the Emperor William, or the enigmatic smile of Pope Leo. Among his fellow Parisians he is acquainted with the look of every comedian of the house of Molière; of the dramatists who write their plays; of the dancers at the opera; of the sculptors who mould their forms; of the Lenten preachers at the Madeleine; and of the doctors at the Salpêtrière. Yet if the portrait of a French statesman of the minute be presented to him without its label, he will fail to tell if it be the Finance Minister of last May, or the Keeper of the Seals in the previous Cabinet of February. It is the same in the provinces. In the country town the bookseller exposes in his window the photograph of the President of the Republic or of the bishop of the diocese side by side with that of M. Coquelin; but one may scour half the departments of France without ever finding the effigy of a deputy thus honoured in his constituency.

The most devoted supporters of the Republic are fain to confess the existence of this profound indifference of the public for the lives and works of their representatives. There is no man of letters more attached to the present regime than M. Claretie, the Academican, who, as long as Republican politics were interesting, actually made Republican politicians the heroes of his romances. He has long ago ceased thus to expend his talent, and now he records the passing incidents of life in Paris as it appears to him week by week. In one of his witty chronicles he relates how

¹ Since this page was written a striking instance of the indifference of an electorate to its member has come under my notice. The deputy of a division in which I was living became a Minister. His father kept a draper's shop in one of the towns of the constituency, and he had himself been a master at the Lycée in the next town; but in neither one nor the other was there any interest manifested at his promotion. Not only was the Minister's portrait never seen in the shop windows, which were filled with those of local and other non-political celebrities, but the fellow-citizens of the father, who had known the son from childhood, displayed complete indifference at this success of a neighbour of their own class. They regarded his appointment without pride and without jealousy: with the same unconcern as if he had been nominated to a postmastership or to a sous-préfecture. The features of M. Loubet, who had been Prime Minister and was President of the Senate, were unknown to Parisians till he became Chief of the State in 1899.

another veteran of the Republic, M. Bardoux, himself a minister in its days of promise, had said to him, "Those who read your 'Life in Paris' in days to come will find mention of authors, of painters, of actors, sometimes a word about salons, and constant reference to the world of art and letters, but never an allusion to politics and the political circles of your time,"¹ and the reproach was recognised to be as just as the omission was inevitable.

In a nation which lives under a representative system of government this is an unhealthy sign. Far better was its case even under the Second Empire. The silence which then prevailed regarding the men who directed its political destinies could be attributed to the jealous censorship of an arbitrary Government to which the nation had confided the regulation of its suffrages. That the French people being absolutely free (subject to the limitations we have noticed), should choose representatives to legislate and to govern for whom they have scant respect, and who in their legislative capacity are incapable of inspiring popular interest, gives the impression that the parliamentary system is a provisional arrangement. For when parliamentary institutions, by reason of their composition or of their action, are not respected they cannot be regarded as permanent; and it is difficult to foresee who would protest in France if a dictator treated the deputies of the Chamber constituted in 1875 as did Louis Napoleon their more respectable predecessors of 1851.

¹ *La Vie à Paris*, Mai 1896.

CHAPTER IV

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE

EVEN if the parliamentary system cannot be regarded as satisfactory or as permanent it is not for that reason unworthy of study; for it is instructive to observe the working of representative institutions which have failed in order to note the causes of failure. Moreover, although the parliamentary system under the Third Republic has not been successful, it has not broken down in all its details. In some matters of practice it works so well as to afford an example to even the mother of Parliaments. Again, though the existing Chamber of Deputies was the creation of the Constitution of 1875, the rules which regulate its procedure are not the product of the experience of merely twenty years, but of fourscore; as ever since the Restoration France has possessed, under some form or other, parliamentary institutions primarily modelled on the English pattern. We may therefore with advantage examine the interior economy of the Chamber of Deputies, noting what points are worthy of imitation, as well as those which display the incompatibility of a democratic parliamentary Assembly with the machinery of centralisation, in a State where constitutions are not permanent.

I

The President of the Chamber of Deputies, being the third person in the official hierarchy of the Republic, has a higher precedence accorded to him than has the Speaker of the House of

Commons in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless he does not enjoy in the Chamber the consideration accorded to the First Commoner¹ in the British Parliament, not only because his office is lacking in historical tradition, but also because he is invested with his rank merely as the head of the annually elected bureau of the Chamber. It is this organisation which distinguishes the presidency of the French legislative assemblies from that of the House of Commons, and before examining the attributes of the President it is necessary to observe the composition of the bureau which surrounds him.

We have noted that no gathering of Frenchmen is apt for the transaction of business until a bureau has been formed. The solitary chairman of English meetings is inadequate. Thus at the opening of a session of Parliament a provisional bureau, consisting of the oldest and youngest members of the House, is

¹ The First Commoner of England ranks below several categories of the Commons over whom he presides, as our anomalous rules of precedence place certain commoners (sons of dukes and marquises and eldest sons of earls) higher even than certain peers. In France the only precedence accorded by the State is that given to official rank, the rules being adapted from the famous decree of Messidor, An XII. (July 1804), which Napoleon drew up after he had become Emperor, while the Revolutionary calendar was still in use. By it the first places, after the Chief of the State, were given to the cardinals, the ministers, the marshals, and the admirals. At the funeral of Victor Hugo in 1885, an anti-clerical fête to which the cardinals and marshals did not flock, the place assigned to the Presidents of the Senate and Chamber with their bureaux was after the ministers and high military commanders. The bureau of the Chamber protested, so the Presidents of the two Houses were promoted to walk behind the representative of the President of the Republic, but their bureaux were left in the place originally assigned to them. This called forth another protest, when the principle was laid down that the Presidents of the two Assemblies cannot be separated from their bureaux. It is needless to observe that squabbles for precedence are as ardent in democratic republics as in the least enlightened monarchies. At the gala in honour of the Russian naval officers at the Paris Opera in 1893, the state-box facing that of the President of the Republic was allotted to the Presidents of the Senate and of the Chamber. The former was M. Challemeil-Lacour, who, when Ambassador in London, was not remarked as a rigid exponent of etiquette; but on this occasion his dignity was offended at the thought of the full height of his rank not being apparent, so he insisted on a screen being erected in the middle of the box, so as to display to the audience the inferiority of M. Casimir-Périer, then President of the Chamber. The next President of the Senate, M. Loubet, in 1897 being summoned by a Commission of the Chamber to give evidence on a matter which had occurred when he was Prime Minister, refused to go to the Palais Bourbon, so the thirty-three Commissioners had to wait on him at his residence at the Luxembourg. He told them by way of consolation that the President of the Chamber might do likewise if similarly summoned by the Senate.

solemnly formed before the election of the President and his regular bureau can be proceeded with.¹

The President for the ensuing session is first balloted for, the election sometimes being keenly contested.² His annual salary is £3000,³ and he is lodged in the Palais Bourbon. Then are chosen the other members of the bureau, to wit, four Vice-Presidents, eight Secretaries, and three Questeurs. The Vice-Presidents are usually deputies of experience, as in the absence of the President the one of them who takes his place is invested with his full prerogatives. Four of the Secretaries have always to be in attendance in their appointed places on the tribune near the President, their duties being to supervise and to sign the minutes of each sitting, and to count the votes taken in divisions. They are frequently chosen among the younger members of the House, and one of them is usually taken from the Reactionary Opposition; but as the office is unpaid this is not a great concession to the minority.

The Questeurs,⁴ as the Latin origin of their name signifies, attend to the finances of the Chamber, and have the general direction of its internal administration, all its branches being centralised in the hands of the Secretary-General of the Questure. They prepare the Budget of the Chamber, which, as the deputies are paid, is considerable.⁵ The office is much sought after, as

¹ The procedure in the election of the bureau of the Senate is almost the same, and indeed the parliamentary practice of the two Houses is identical in most respects, but it is more convenient to deal with it in treating of the Lower Chamber.

² As in 1888, when M. Floquet resigned the Presidency to become Prime Minister. M. Méline and M. Clemenceau received an equal number of votes, the place being accorded to the former by reason of his seniority in age.

³ He receives 72,000 francs as President, together with 9000 francs, his salary as a deputy, making a total of 81,000 francs or £3240.

⁴ The Questeurs date from the Consulate, Frimaire, An XII. (December 1803). From 1814 to 1851 their administrative duties in the various Legislatures were similar to those now exercised by them; but under the Second Empire the President of the Corps Législatif discharged most of their functions, which somewhat resemble those of a "Chief Clerk" in an English Government department.

⁵ It is also complicated, as deputies have deductions made from their pay to provide them with certain comforts. There is a small compulsory subscription for the buvette or canteen, which entitles the members to the unlimited consumption of refreshments, a discretion perhaps only possible in a temperate

the Questeurs receive double the salary of an ordinary member, and are provided with apartments in the palace.

The bureau, thus consisting of the President, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, and Questeurs, forms a consultative committee charged to direct the interior order of the Chamber during the session, and to act in its name should the occasion arise during the recess. It directs the reporting of the debates, it nominates the clerks, the shorthand writers, and the other officials of the House, and regulates the pay and promotion of the staff. It is also held responsible for the official reports of proceedings. If taken to task for any act within its province, it may become the subject of a debate in the Chamber, and of a vote of confidence, which, if refused, would entail the resignation of all its members, including the President.

The bureau which surrounds the President is not the only feature of his office unlike the appurtenances of the speakership of the House of Commons. The entire conception of his position is different. He is not elected to the office by reason of his impartial temperament; the choice invariably falls upon a combatant politician who does not sink his opinions in the chair, which, on the contrary, he most often quits to assume the lead of a party.¹

It would be impossible for the President of the Chamber to be impartial with the unbiassed impartiality which is the tradition of Speakers of the House of Commons. When a regime shall have lasted in France for fifty years, then it may be regarded as permanent, and not liable to be rooted up by the victory of a party; but so long as the existence of any groups in Parliament, country like France. There is a further deduction of 120 francs a year made for the railway companies, which in return provide each legislator with a free first-class pass over all French railway systems.

¹ Since M. Grévy, the first occupant of the chair under the Constitution of 1875, left it to be Chief of the State, down to the general elections of 1898 all the Presidents of the Lower House, excepting M. Burdeau who died in office, subsequently became Prime Ministers, namely MM. Gambetta, Brisson, Floquet, Méline, Casimir-Périer, and Dupuy; and each one save M. Méline descended straight from the chair to form a Ministry. MM. Périer and Dupuy had also each the curious experience when overthrown as Prime Minister of being forthwith re-elected to the presidency of the Chamber which had just driven him from power.

however ill-organised and discredited, shows that the duration of the regime is an open question in the minds of a section of the nation, so long it behoves the President of the Legislature to defend the constitution of which he is the servant. It is one of the inconveniences of unstable government that officers of the State, who, according to English ideas, ought to stand high above party, are impelled to consider themselves as defenders of the existing Government against all comers. The effect on the President of the Chamber is of a somewhat complex character. He feels it to be his duty as a guardian of the Constitution to suppress demonstrations prejudicial to the Republic, and to put at a disadvantage the deputies who make them. Thus, by an easy transition, he comes to the same attitude of mind with regard to opponents not of the Constitution but of the Government of the moment. Hence he may be charged with partiality when he feels that he is doing his duty impartially in meting out the same severity to all opponents of the Ministry, whether Republicans who desire no change in the Constitution, Socialists who wish to revise it, or Reactionaries who would upset it. This is one of the many signs that the parliamentary system requires a permanent and stable regime in which to flourish. Moreover, the instinctive attitude of a President of the Chamber towards the persons holding office is simply the inborn reverence which every French functionary has for the central Government; while respect for parliamentary traditions is obviously an artificial sentiment in a Frenchman.¹

¹ The mother of Parliaments is regarded with such a vigilant eye by French parliamentarians that the following appreciation of the action of the Speaker of the House of Commons is worth noting. It is from an article in the *Temps* entitled "Révolution Silencieuse," of which the text was an utterance of the Speaker on the report stage of the Agricultural Land Rating Bill, with reference to an amendment of a private member, when he observed: "I think it right to point out that the amendment gives to every person who buys an ounce of tobacco the right to appeal to Quarter Sessions" (*Times*, July 1, 1896). On this the *Temps* remarked: "M. Gully est en train de transformer du tout au tout les fonctions du Speaker et d'en faire un président de chambre continental ou américain. Au lieu d'être le juge impartial, n'intervenant qu'à la dernière extrémité, défenseur né des droits de la libre discussion, il tend à accélérer le débat, à servir le gouvernement. Enfin il vient de faire une innovation qui dépasse toutes les autres: avant de mettre aux voix un amendement il s'est permis de

If the impartiality of the President of the Chamber be not of the same quality as that of the Speaker of the House of Commons the circumstances attending the exercise of his functions are dissimilar. The ceremony observed in the two Assemblies when their respective Presidents enter the Chamber is perhaps characteristic of the duties expected of them. At the Palais Bourbon the President makes his entry escorted by soldiers to the roll of drums, reminding the deputies that armed force is present to enforce discipline if necessary. At Westminster the Speaker takes his seat to the unheeded recital of a formal prayer to an unseen power, suggesting that moral suasion should suffice to control human passions. When the House of Commons once forgot its orderly traditions and scandalised Europe with a fray rarely paralleled in the stormiest sessions of the Convention, French parliamentarians consoled themselves by noting that the outrage took place in the absence of the Speaker, whose appearance restored the brawling assembly to calm. In the French Chamber the person of the President has no greater authority than that of either of the Vice-Presidents. If, when one of the Vice-Presidents was in the chair, a scene of uncontrollable violence took place he would, after exhausting all other remedies, summon to his aid not his superior, but the officer commanding the military guard of the palace.¹

The official formula describing the opening of proceedings in le réduire à l'absurde. En d'autres termes, il a pris part à la discussion, il est descendu de la sérénité de son Olympe, il a fait ce que les présidents de Chambre sur le continent ne se donnent que trop licence de faire, mais ce qui est le renversement de toutes les traditions le l'office du Speaker. Et c'est ainsi que la Chambre des Communes glisse peu à peu vers le parlementarisme imparfait ou le pseudo-parlementarisme des États à constitutions écrites et à règlements codifiés. C'est toute une révolution—une révolution plus grave que celles qui ont fait bien autrement de bruit" (*Temps*, 4 Juillet 1896). The writer was unaware that former Speakers, such as Mr. Manners-Sutton, were less judicially neutral persons than those whom our generation has seen.

¹ Before proceeding to this last extremity he would put on his hat and declare the sitting suspended to give angry passions time to cool. The military have been called in on rare occasions only when this preliminary remedy has had no effect. But in any case of difficulty the Vice-President would act on his own authority and not send for the President. The presence of the military at the Palais Bourbon is primarily not for the purpose of keeping order within the House, but to prevent the invasion of the Legislature by the people of Paris, which has occurred several times in the century.

the English House announces that "the Speaker took the chair." In France the *Journal Officiel* does not suggest that the President assumes a sitting posture, possibly because during the whole of a debate arousing interest or passion he has to be on his legs. At each moment he is introducing interjectory remarks to the interrupters of the orator, and the qualities which he has to put forth are not those of a ponderous judge. He requires rather the muscular agility of a town-crier or of the conductor of an unruly orchestra as he sways his paper-knife and agitates his bell with vain supplications for silence. This constant altercation with the House does not tend to impassiveness. Hence colloquies held by the President with members of the Chamber must not be appraised as though they fell from the lips of a grave personage elevated to a position almost of majesty by the tradition of centuries, of which his venerable costume is the symbol.

The architecture of the Chamber, though not peculiar to the French legislature, does not favour a respectful attitude on the part of members towards the President. The arrangement is not unlike that of the theatre of the Greeks, the President and the orator being placed on a double stage, one tribune superposed on the other,¹ facing the seats of the deputies ranged in semi-circular tiers. Thus when the debater rouses the passions of the auditory (to which he addresses himself and not to the chair), its cries and gesticulations are perforce borne in the direction of the President, who, from his elevated post, must sometimes be under the illusion that they are aimed at him. To a spectator in the

¹ The suppression of the tribune for the orator is a suggestion constantly made in the French press after unusually violent scenes in the Chamber, or when the question of the rebuilding of the Palais Bourbon is discussed. The practice of delivering speeches in Parliament from a special platform dates from 1790, after the migration of the Constituent Assembly from Versailles to Paris. The arrangement favoured revolutionary oratory, and was continued through the parliamentary regimes of the Restoration and of the July Monarchy. Louis Napoleon suppressed the tribune in 1852, and during the period in which the proceedings of the Corps Législatif were not made public the members spoke from their places as in England. This was regarded as a significant act of tyranny, the legislative Assembly being thus assimilated to a petty provincial council, and when M. de Montalembert first spoke in the mutilated chamber (June 1852) the adversaries of dictatorship noted with joy that the eloquent orator did not seem incommoded by the despotic change. In 1867 the tribune was revived as a sign of the advent of a Liberal regime.

gallery, arriving in the midst of a tumultuous scene, the impression is that there are two actors on the platforms at bay with an angry audience in front of them, equally hostile to both. A session of the House of Commons, carried on under these architectural conditions, would probably modify the tone of the Speaker's impartiality, unless he were an automatic phenomenon, for he would find himself in the direct line of fire of the interruptions which an unpopular debater provokes. Moreover, the position of the orator face to face with his critics aggravates the temptation to interrupt, it being infinitely easier to shout and to gesticulate at an object in front than to hurl interjections obliquely.

If therefore in stormy debates the President appears to share the brunt of the combat with the orator, it is not surprising that on days of calm he should comment on the speeches when they seem to call for his emendation. With a slight modification of the position of the tribunes he might imagine himself in the place of the chorus in ancient comedy. Such was the conception which M. Floquet¹ had of the presidency. That conspicuous Republican was criticised by his countrymen with excessive rigour, from the days when, with an ill-timed reference to French sympathy for Poland, he greeted the Tsar of Russia visiting Napoleon III. His foible was to pose before the public as the incarnation of the Revolution; and he imagined that his head resembled that of Robespierre, who would have inevitably cut it off as not a fitting adornment for a revolutionist of such anti-autocratic views. When elected President of the Chamber M. Floquet magnified his office, not without dignity. If such a phrase may be used of an anti-clerical statesman, he pontificated before the Assembly; and when the Panama scandal drove him, perhaps rather harshly, from the tribune of the Palais Bourbon, it was felt that under a regime remarkable for the dinginess of its great men, a less picturesque figure might have been better spared. His running commentary on the speeches of deputies was one of the more genial humours of the sittings of

¹ President of the Chamber 1885-88 and 1889-92.

the Chamber.¹ Thus when a Catholic orator dared to deplore the influence of freemasonry, M. Floquet rebuked him with the intimation that Pope Pius IX. was a freemason; and when shocked members of the Right demanded the authority for that *ex cathedra* statement, he referred them superbly to a popular encyclopædia more famous for its eclecticism than for its accuracy.

M. Brisson² is a Radical of an austerer type, whose presidential wisdom took didactic form. For example, on the vote for a public funeral for Marshal Canrobert he favoured the Chamber with his opinions on the right of soldiers to disobey their officers if ordered to take part in a *coup d'état*. Obituary discourses of less ungracious tone are part of the duty of the President. On the decease of a deputy he is expected to announce it to his colleagues in a few well-turned sentences of regretful biography, in which party strife is forgotten; the recognition of death as a reconciler being further simulated by the selection by ballot of a deputation of members of all groups to follow the remains to the grave.

The presidency of Gambetta³ is looked back upon with interest on account of the prestige of the man rather than of his conduct in the chair. During the three years that he occupied it, his figure was the lightning-conductor round which played all the political storms within and without the Palais Bourbon. When he was elected the clerical outrage of the Seize Mai was fresh in the memories of the victorious Republicans, who had in their ranks anti-clericals as violent in their sectarianism as the discomfited Ultramontane zealots. Thus when MM. Paul Bert and Jules Ferry unfolded their laicising programmes, they were regarded by the Reactionaries as the agents of the President of the Chamber, who had denounced clericalism as the enemy. Hence it was not possible for Gambetta to leave in the chair a tradition of calm impassiveness.

¹ On one occasion he remarked from the chair, "Si vous avez le droit d'exiger un Président impartial vous n'avez pas le droit d'exiger un Président muet," December 15, 1887.

² President of the Chamber 1881-85; and 1894-98.

³ January 1879-November 1881.

His chief enemies were not, however, his outspoken clerical and Monarchical opponents. They were of his own Republican household, and secret intrigues were plotted against him, now at the Élysée by the crafty Père Grévy, now at the ministry of Public Instruction, where Jules Ferry was scheming a victory other than that he was achieving over priests and nuns.¹ At that curious period it was not to the Quai d'Orsay that the chanceries of Europe looked, while M. Waddington handed on the portfolio for Foreign Affairs to M. de Freycinet, and M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire succeeded those able men when the first Ferry Cabinet was formed. It was to the Palace next door, in the rue St. Dominique, that foreign statesmen turned, where the brilliant Duc de Morny had died, and where Gambetta now was not dreaming of parliamentary practice or of abrogating the Concordat. Whatever his hopes and his projects none were to be realised. He left the presidency of the Chamber to direct the brief tragi-comedy of the Grand Ministère, and by the end of another year his incomplete life had gone out in mystery in a suburban cottage at Ville d'Avray.

The remarkable power which Gambetta exercised in every department of the State while he was President of the Chamber no doubt increased his authority in ruling over that Assembly at a difficult time; but it is doubtful if his tenure of the chair had a good influence on the character of French parliamentary institutions. If with the consolidation of the Republic the presidency had been bestowed on deputies willing to become

¹ Certain friends of M. Ferry, whose good faith is beyond question, assure me that his reputed hostility for Gambetta is an unfounded legend, but I cannot accept their view as mine is based on confidences made by Gambetta himself in his last years. The contrary legend of their sincerely amicable relations is due to manifold causes, some of which are mentioned in this volume (book iv. c. 6). It is natural that men who were on terms of friendship with the two statesmen, being loyal to the memory of both, should wish the belief in their mutual enmity not to be perpetuated. Moreover, it is likely enough that Gambetta took care, for obvious reasons, not to reveal to his French political friends all his secret mistrust of his Republican rivals, which he certainly did confide to other intimate ears. The public utterances of the two men on their mutual relations have no more value than similar declarations have in political circles of all countries. No one denies M. Grévy's intrigues against Gambetta; yet when they were most notorious the latter went out of his way in a speech at Tours to express his devotion and respect for the President whom he distrusted (August 3, 1881).

professional Presidents, abandoning active politics, the parliamentary history of the Third Republic might possibly have been more edifying. The fact that Gambetta succeeded M. Grévy, promoted to be Chief of the State, at once founded a tradition that the President of the Chamber was henceforth to be the Dauphin of the Republic; and since Gambetta died every holder but one of that office, who lived to see a Congress summoned for the election of President of the Republic, has coveted its suffrages. M. Casimir-Périer alone carried off the prize, which he quickly let fall; but M. Floquet profoundly believed that there was only one step from the Palais Bourbon to the Élysée; and at each National Congress from the time he first presided over the Chamber to his eviction from the Chair in 1898, M. Brisson was a candidate for the supreme honour.

Gambetta so far regarded the post as that of a political leader that he used to call upon himself to speak, descending to the lower tribune and ceding his chair to a vice-president. On one of these occasions he made an impassioned speech on foreign affairs; and on another he closed a debate on *scrutin-de-liste*¹ by a lengthy oration, in which he persuaded the Lower House to pass an electoral scheme with which he identified himself. In doing this he introduced no innovation, as the faculty of taking part in debate was given to the Presidents of the Chamber under the Restoration and the Monarchy of July.² Since the death of

¹ May 19, 1881. On the former occasion Gambetta was, in the course of the discussion, moved to improvise a debating speech, announcing his intention with the curious formula, "*Je me donne la parole.*" On the latter he did not take the chair at all that day, but till the time came for him to wind up the debate sat, it was observed, in the place which he had occupied in the Corps Législatif of the Empire. An amusing incident displayed the anomalous inconvenience of a President taking part in debates. Annoyed by the interruptions of a Bonapartist deputy, Gambetta forgot that he was no longer in the chair, and exclaimed, "*M. Laroche-Joubert, je vous rappelle au silence!*" and as this called forth the obvious retort, he added, "*en ma qualité d'orateur.*"

² M. Dupin, the well-known President of the reign of Louis Philippe, is sometimes quoted as a model director of debates who made an excessive use of his right to take part in them. We have, of course, in our House of Peers the example of the president of an assembly who is a party politician taking part in debates; but the case of an unelected president of an unelected Chamber does not afford much analogy for representative assemblies, nor is the Lord Chancellor charged with keeping order. The chief French authority on parliamentary procedure refers to the

Gambetta it has not been the practice for Presidents to use this right, save when their own conduct has been challenged in matters of gravity.¹

Among the minor attributes of the President is that of advising, in conjunction with his colleague of the Senate, the President of the Republic on the choice of a new Prime Minister after the fall of a Cabinet. The usage has grown up for the Chief of the State, immediately on receiving the resignation of a defeated minister, to summon the Presidents of the two Houses in order to ascertain their views on the situation, the President of the Chamber being highly qualified to foretell what politician has the best chances of forming a Ministry likely to survive for half a year. Sometimes the President of the Chamber himself undertakes the formation of a Cabinet. In that case it is not self-seeking ambition, but the pressure of others which urges him to quit the relatively calm security of the Presidential Palace. For there without rashness he may reckon on being left undisturbed till the Parliament's end; while the troubled tenure of the premiership will, with almost mathematical certainty, cease before the seasons have revolved, leaving him bereft of office and of salary, if not damaged in repute.

II

The Chief of the Executive, in a State where the principle is recognised of the sovereignty of the people, obviously has not the same powers of convoking the representative assemblies as has the sovereign in a country where the Parliament is still presumed to be composed of the three Estates of the Realm. Consequently in France it is not the President of the Republic who convokes the Chambers. They meet automatically at a fixed

power enjoyed by the Speaker of the English House of Commons to take part in debates as an ordinary member when the House is in committee under the presidency of the Chairman (Pierre, *Traité de Droit Politique*, 917); but it does not seem to have been used since Speaker Denison's time.

¹ As when M. Floquet explained his connection with the Panama affair, December 23, 1892.

date in January for a session which must last for at least five months;¹ and the letters of convocation are addressed to members by the Presidents of their respective Houses. If, however, the President of the Republic should deem an extraordinary session necessary, the Constitutional Law empowers him to summon the Chambers at any period of the year.²

At the opening of a session no ministerial declaration is made corresponding to the Queen's speech. When Gambetta was President of the Chamber it was his practice on being re-elected to pronounce a harangue, which in form and in tone had the character of a manifesto of the Chief of the State.³ Since his time the occupants of the chair have usually been content to return thanks for their election in a patriotic discourse; and at the end of a Parliament it is their practice, after reading the decree of dissolution, to sum up in vague terms the progress of the Republic since the previous general election. The Constitution gives to the President of the Republic the right to address messages to the Chambers.⁴ It is rarely exercised, and no Chief of the Executive would be tempted so to use it as to identify himself with the Ministry which happened to be in office at the beginning of a session. Nor would a Prime Minister venture to announce to Parliament the programme of reforms which he intended to effect, remembering that only thrice in the history of the Third Republic has a Ministry in existence in January survived to the close of the year. No such fear haunts British Cabinets. Yet they would do well to imitate the French plan in modifying a practice which latterly has degenerated into a disingenuous flourish of a specious and

¹ L.C. du 16 Juillet 1875. The provision that Parliament shall sit for at least five months was intended to take the place of the fiction found in some French constitutions of the permanence of the sittings of the Legislature. As a matter of practice the Chambers sit all the year round, excepting at the ordinary holiday seasons, taking a long vacation in the summer and shorter recesses at the end of the year and at Easter.

² If an extraordinary session be decreed in a hurry, or if a vacation be shortened for reasons of urgency, the Presidents of the Chambers summon the members by telegrams addressed to them individually.

³ The most remarkable was his last, that of January 21, 1881.

⁴ L.C. du 16 Juillet 1875.

impossible programme, put into the lips of a gracious Sovereign, and with irreverent insincerity committed to the protection of the Almighty—whose name is publicly evoked in England with a levity as offensive as is the French official practice of persistently ignoring it.¹

As there is no Queen's speech there is no address in reply to it involving lengthy and useless debate. Under the present Constitution it would be impossible to introduce this loquacious method of wasting time. In the days of parliamentary Monarchy, when French statesmen had ever before them the English model, the practice was adopted in the Legislatures of the Restoration and of the Monarchy of July of making addresses to the Crown.² It is another curious example of the contrast between England and France, that whereas at that period the House of Commons, though its orators were of a much higher type than now, gave only a single sitting to the debate on the address, the French Chamber, likewise rich in oratory, devoted fifteen or even twenty days to brilliant tourneys of eloquence. It was under a limited franchise that French parliamentarians thus let loose their tongues, while the House of Commons became democratic before it ceased to be business-like. In renouncing a quality which before other nations is the pride of Englishmen our Lower House has not retained its more ornate virtues, the talk which sterilises sessions being as slovenly as it is dreary. In the comparative study of representative institutions, foreign observers are struck with the fact that in the English Parliament, to which they all look, the decay of eloquence has been coincident with the gradual breakdown of the parliamentary machine. The opposite might have been expected, as rhetoric is rarely practical and classical form is not a saver of time. But a high standard

¹ "Chaque année, quand nous lisons dans vos journaux le discours de la couronne, nous y trouvons la mention obligée de la divine Providence : cette mention arrive mécaniquement, comme l'apostrophe aux dieux immortels à la quatrième page d'un discours de rhétorique."—Taine, *Littérature Anglaise*, "Stuart Mill."

² In 1832, for example, Parliament met on November 19, but the address to the King in reply to his speech to the peers and deputies was not voted till December 3 (*Procès Verbal des Séances de la Chambre des Députés*).

of style is a check on rash verbosity; and the obligation to express thought in well-fashioned speech deters from the slipshod facility of unstudied chatter, fatal to the expeditious conduct of affairs.

French abstract admirers of the British Parliament have a right to criticise the garrulous abuses which have grown in it around venerable forms, the failure of the parliamentary system in France being due to other causes. Even if it were now the practice of the Chamber of Deputies to raise debates on the ministerial declaration read by a new Prime Minister, not at the beginning of a session, but on the formation of a Cabinet, it would be difficult to make it the subject of long discussion, as it is chiefly composed of commonplace generalities accepted by all Republicans. A ministerial declaration has been described as a mixture of an oration before a provincial Republican club and a lesson in civic duty in an elementary school;¹ but it is hard to see how a minister under the Third Republic could be more definite. It would ruin the fancy of the most intrepid constructor of Queen's speeches if he knew that the average duration of a Ministry was eight months, and that the best his Cabinet could hope for was to make progress with the Budget and to reach the holidays without disaster.

Moreover, in France no one regards the making of laws as the primary object of the Legislature. There are several reasons for this. The great reconstructor of France set up in the land which he had mastered a framework of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, too solid to need periodical remodelling, as well as codes of laws sufficient for the wants of several generations to come. Hence during the century since Napoleon undertook his great work, the chief pre-occupation of French politicians has been to decide under what regime shall be administered those

¹ *Journal des Débats*. The following extract is from a political catechism published by a satirist on the occasion of a ministerial crisis:—"How is a ministerial declaration composed?" "With obscure phrases which every one can interpret as he pleases." "Give an example." "France . . . Republic . . . maintenance of order . . . Revolution . . . government worthy of the name . . . equitable incidence of taxation . . . social solidarity . . . aid to agriculture . . . respect for universal suffrage . . .," etc.

laws which survive every form of government. Not that there is any lack of statutes passed every year by the Legislatures which have succeeded one another under Empire, Monarchy, and Republic ; but, with few exceptions, they are not of the character which in our country keeps the eyes of the nation fixed on the two parties of the State engaged in promoting and opposing definite projects. At the beginning of each session the Questeurs furnish the deputies with a voluminous tract, enumerating all the measures laid before the Chamber ; and statisticians publish tables to show that the number of laws and decrees promulgated under the Third Republic is annually about the same as under previous regimes. At the same time one may be a careful observer of parliamentary proceedings and a constant attendant in the galleries of the Chamber without perceiving that any legislation whatever has been effected or even essayed.

The bulk of the law-making, in its strict sense, is of an uncontroversial character, and passes unnoticed. The most conspicuous of the laws, which under the Third Republic have been the subject of keen controversy, have had a quasi-constitutional character. In a country prone to political convulsion there is no gradual evolution of reform, peacefully accepted by the majority of the nation. For example, the question of the representation of the people, which for over half a century used to decide the fate of Governments in England, was settled for France for all time in the streets of Paris in 1848 ; and there has been little legislation in connection with the exercise of the franchise since Louis Bonaparte organised that Revolution for his own profit.

Thus Napoleon's great fabric of laws and institutions, supplemented by an occasional revolution, has precluded the need for constant reform-legislation. This indeed is one cause of the failure of the parliamentary system in France ; for it must necessarily become useless or dangerous if its chief occupation is not the work for which it was constructed. If we look at the largest questions which have occupied the House of Commons of late years, we shall see that in France they were finally settled in the organisation after the Revolution in such a way as to have

anticipated the dreams of reformers in England, or as to be incapable of revision without fresh revolution. Parliamentary franchise has been mentioned. The agrarian laws, which make the House of Commons devote undue time to Ireland, are not grievous to any section of the population in France, where the conditions of the occupation of the soil were definitely settled three generations ago. Local government and administration, which the House of Commons has perforce to deal with in an unscientific and piecemeal fashion without finality, were settled at the same period in France on scientific and unchangeable lines.

The relations of Church and State also were organised by the same master-hand in the concordatory arrangement, which survives regimes most antagonistic in matters ecclesiastic. There is no homogeneity of sentiment regarding the Church throughout the land, one region being attached to it, and another neglecting its ministrations. Yet no group of politicians would propose that whereas the population of Burgundy is notoriously anti-clerical, its departments¹ never returning, out of a total of twenty-seven deputies, more than one practising Catholic, and whereas the past history of the province is separate from that of France, its inhabitants in the Morvan hills still speaking a Celtic dialect, such parts of the four dioceses of Sens, Dijon, Autun, and Belley as are contained in the ancient duchy shall, after a given date, be independent of the Minister of Public Worship. Even a senator, in whose House questions of exclusively historical and antiquarian interest are sometimes discussed, would shrink from bringing forward such a proposition.

From this it must not be thought that there are no grievances which need redressing in France. All that is meant is that the great settlement after the Revolution anticipated ambitious schemes of legislation which might have filled a century. For ordinary needs the unobtrusive enactments which yearly pass

¹ Yonne, Côte-d'Or, Saône-et-Loire, and Ain. M. Schneider of Le Creusot was the only Reactionary member for a Burgundian constituency for twenty years.

unperceived suffice, or indeed, in the opinion of some critics, are excessive.

The educational measures of M. Jules Ferry are an example of legislation which partook less of the nature of interior reforms, deciding the fate of Ministries, than of a quasi-constitutional policy, involving the consolidation of the Republic. The clericals, under the MacMahon presidency, had declared themselves the enemies of the Republic. The laicising of the public education of the country was the defensive retaliation of the Republicans when they came into power. With the rightfulness or wisdom of that policy we are not dealing. Its broad lines were approved by the great mass of the Republican party. Therefore it might have been thought that the possession of a definite policy would have put an end to the era of ministerial instability, which had been the necessary incident of a period of transition and uncertainty. Yet instead of successive Ministries staking their existence on the reform of public education, they displaced one another without that reform being interrupted. M. Jules Ferry commenced his educational policy as Minister of Public Instruction in the Waddington Cabinet in 1879. He continued to hold the portfolio in the Freycinet Cabinet of 1880, which issued the decrees dissolving the unauthorised religious teaching-orders, retaining it when, on M. de Freycinet's retirement, he became Prime Minister himself. He in turn retired on a question of exterior politics, and Gambetta formed a Cabinet, making Minister of Education M. Paul Bert, who was practically the author of the "Ferry Laws." Then when the Grand Ministère had lived for two months, M. de Freycinet became Prime Minister again, and M. Ferry resumed his old place.

It is not for their steadfastness in educational policy that the Republicans deserve criticism, but because, having that definite policy which united a great majority, they displayed to the world that the French democracy was incapable of using parliamentary institutions. It was not because leaders were wanting as in later days. It was precisely because there was a popular leader that envy and division fell upon the Republicans; and their advent

to power inaugurated the epoch of chaotic misgovernment which has brought discredit on the French democracy. The political ills from which France is suffering at the end of the century may to some degree be traced to the period when the victorious Republicans split themselves up into factions rather than be led and organised by Gambetta, who died the victim of their jealousy. Consequently to-day, if reform be needed, a minister dare not inscribe it on his official programme as a measure which he will conduct through Parliament;¹ for after a few months' tenure of office he is generally dismissed for fortuitous reasons unconnected with his policy, his opinions, or his ability.

If party government could have been established in France, Ministries would have had longer lives and more definite policies; so possibly they might have imbued the Chamber with the idea that the chief end of a Legislature is to appear to legislate. For though for reasons just stated France does not require much legislation, nevertheless, in the development of society, new needs constantly arise which call for State-regulation. For example, the relations of capital and labour have great importance in a commercial community, and constant complaint is heard of the difficulty of obtaining legislation on urgent matters arising out of them. Thus the familiar question of Employers' Liability has been before Parliament for years without result, because, in addition to the normal conflict of opinion it excites, the Chamber has no time to legislate on the subject. It spends its sessions in occupations unconnected with constructive law-making. As it is ordained that the French shall have a Parliament, they would do better to make less use of it as a Convention or a tribunal for the public exposure of national scandals. Even the modern British method of conducting business, with all its defects, is preferable. If a sanguine minister in January could offer to the

¹ The only example I can find of a reform mentioned in a ministerial declaration being passed into law in the lifetime of the Ministry announcing it, was in March 1892, when M. Loubet, on taking office, expressed a hope that a law regulating the labour of women and children would be passed,—as it was the following October, four weeks before M. Loubet's Cabinet was turned out. But even in this case the bill in question had been introduced before M. Loubet came in.

Chamber a catalogue of projects of law, it might at all events impel deputies to present the illusion that they were engaged in legislating for their country.

A French minister, if he were sure of remaining in office for more than a year, could promise a long programme of measures with less disingenuousness than an English minister displays in a Queen's speech, as, excepting at the end of a Parliament, he is not limited to a single session for its achievement. Legislation before the Chamber does not lapse by the prorogation of Parliament, and with the beginning of a new session its consideration is resumed at the point where it was left. It is only a dissolution which invalidates all the uncompleted work of the Chamber.¹ But the Senate is never dissolved. Consequently if a measure have been sent to the Upper House it can pass into law after the Chamber which gave it birth is dead, and can even be sent down to the new Chamber for further consideration should the Senate have amended it. The Senate, being partially renewed every three years, is not subject to dissolution; and a measure might remain under consideration in the Upper House for ten years, and then be passed into law without any infringement of the regulations or of the Constitution.

The manifest occupations of the Chamber are the voting of the budget and the interpellation of ministers on subjects often of a scandalous character. We will first glance at the operations followed in the voting of the budget, as they account for the greater part of the parliamentary time.

III

The whole body of deputies is divided by lot into eleven bureaux,² their formation being the first act of the Chamber on

¹ In a memorandum on this point of procedure, supplied by the Secretary-General of the presidency of the Chamber to an official of the Belgian Chamber, who wanted information for his deputies, regret is expressed that even at the end of a Parliament the labour of members is brought to nought; but the Secretary-General adds that the members of the succeeding Legislature can make considerable use of the reports drawn up by their predecessors in the case of measures that are reintroduced.—December 17, 1892.

² The number of bureaux into which the Legislative Chambers have been divided has differed from time to time. The existing arrangement was made by

meeting after dissolution or prorogation, and the operation is renewed monthly. The first work of the bureaux in the opening session of a parliament is, as we have seen, to validate the elections of the deputies. At ordinary times their chief duty is to make a preliminary examination of projects of law laid before the Chamber. This system of dividing the Assembly into bureaux is more ancient even than the Revolution, dating from the meetings of the States-General under the old Monarchy. In 1789 the Third Estate, before it took the name of National Assembly, decided that it should resolve itself into bureaux, in which all matters of interest should be discussed before being submitted to deliberation.¹ It was thus as a relic of the ancient Monarchy that Louis XVIII. imposed the system² on the new Chamber created by the Charter in 1814; and since then it has always been maintained under all the succeeding regimes. The division of the Legislature into bureaux is regarded by publicists as the radical initial difference between the English and the French parliamentary systems. It is indeed the keystone of the French system, the whole parliamentary procedure depending on it.

The bureaux make a preliminary examination of a given project of law which is necessarily superficial, as all bills are submitted to all the bureaux. After this examination, each bureau nominates one of its number as its commissioner³ to support the opinion of its majority in the special commission, composed of the eleven nominees of the eleven bureaux, which makes a minute study of the project in question. It is on the deliberations and decisions of the commission thus formed that the fate of a measure practically depends.

the "Règlement de la Chambre des Députés" of 1876, which gives about 50 members to each of the eleven bureaux. The Senate, which, unlike the Chamber, has a fixed number of members, 300, is divided into nine bureaux, three of 34 members and six of 33.

¹ June 7, 1789.

² Pierre, *Traité de Droit Politique et Parlementaire*.

³ On some commissions each bureau nominates two or three members, as we shall see later. According to a regulation not always observed no member of a bureau can be nominated to serve on more than two commissions, excepting on the "Commissions mensuelles" to be mentioned hereafter. No minister can be put on a commission, and when a deputy becomes minister he *ipso facto* resigns from the commissions of which he is a member.

This method of sifting and reporting on all the work of the Legislature in commissions¹ no doubt accounts for the small proportion of public debate in the Chamber on projects of law in general; but it does not at first sight account for the undue prominence of the budget in the general discussions of the House. We must, therefore, for a moment notice the relative position of the various categories of commissions as well as their way of working.²

There are, first of all, the monthly commissions which regulate questions of order and formality requiring rapid decision. The most important is that which examines all projects of law, excepting Government measures, before even they are sent for their preparatory consideration in the bureaux. The work of this commission is purely formal; it has nothing to do with the merits or details of the bills. It simply has to report if they are of sufficient importance and of proper character to be taken into consideration by Parliament. Its duties are intended to be of a time-saving character in putting restrictions on frivolous or improper propositions. This "commission of initiative" consists of twenty-two members, two nominated by each bureau. Each of the other monthly commissions has eleven members, and their duties are to report on projects of departmental and communal interest, to examine petitions, and to advise on deputies' applications for leave of absence.

¹ I use the English word "commission" for the French *commission*, though some English writers translate it by "committee," presumably because in England the word "commission" is usually applied to extra-parliamentary bodies. But as the commissions of the French Legislature have little in common with our parliamentary committees, it seems to me to be less confusing to retain the word, especially as in the Revolutionary Assemblies the bodies which performed somewhat different functions were called "comités." Moreover, the word *bureau* might also be translated "committee," as I have sometimes rendered it in the chapter describing the work of the "bureaux de validation"; but here as both terms are used it is better to retain the French forms. It is to be noted that the word "bureau" has two distinct senses in the French Legislature, being applied to the committees here described and also to the body of members who assist the President.

² It is competent for the Chamber sitting in full house to nominate commissions otherwise than by the bureaux, but when this takes place it is usually not for an inquiry into a legislative project. For example, the commission to investigate the Panama affair was thus named in November 1892, as was that of December 1880 to inquire into the conduct of General de Cissey as Prime Minister.

The commissions, in which bills before Parliament are put into order, only terminate their existence with the end of the Legislature,¹ unless they have previously finished their work. In some cases this never occurs, for no limit of time being usually put on their deliberations, it may happen that a proposition which has been initiated amid factitious enthusiasm is thus allowed to die a natural death. The discussions are private, but the authors of projects of law have the right to be heard in their support. Each commission commences its operations by appointing a president, a secretary, and its most important member, a reporter; it being a rule of procedure that the work of a commission can be made known to the Chamber by the report alone.² The report is the official document whereby a commission submits to the Chamber its definite conclusions on a project of law considered by it. It is formed of two parts: the text of the project as adopted by the commission, and the arguments to sustain the adoption of that form. It is usual to add the objections which the minority of the commissioners may have made to it. The report thus drawn up is printed and distributed to members of the Chamber, at least twenty-four hours before the "general discussion" of the bill is placed on the order of the day. The reporter then mounts the tribune, and defends the report in a discourse, which, if the subject be important, gives a chance to the speaker of winning swift renown. With skill he may, in introducing a Government project, assume a position of greater prominence and influence than the minister himself. It was thus that M. Paul Bert became the real author of the Ferry Education Law; for though not a member of either of the Cabinets which fathered the reform, he was the reporter of the commission charged with its examination.

To a stranger used to English parliamentary procedure and

¹ It would appear that commissions in the Senate, which, as we have seen, is not subject to dissolution, are eternal; but, as the aged senators have not that quality, it sometimes happens that all the original members of a commission have disappeared before its work is done, and the Senate, therefore, has to have special rules for the renewal of its commissions.

² President Floquet: March 29, 1892.

traditions, the position in the Legislature of the reporters of important commissions seems to be providentially arranged to counterbalance the inconvenience of the brief duration of Ministries. But the French system of commissions could not coexist in a Parliament with the party system. It can work in a simulacrum of a Parliament, as was the Corps Législatif of the Second Empire, where an arbitrary Government commanded a docile majority and named the ministers. It is a useful expedient under the Third Republic, where the bureaux of the Chamber nominate the commissions, which work steadily, little affected by the ephemeral Ministries which flit by. But with the party system it would produce deadlock and confusion, unless its initial stage were remodelled, a commission being (excepting on special occasions) the nominee of the bureaux, which are equal companies of members constituted by lot. By the freaks of chance, its majority, reporting on the most important measure before Parliament, might be in conflict with the majority of the House and with the Ministry. In a Chamber of 600 members, divided into two organised parties, wherein the Government had a majority of sixty, if five of the eleven bureaux, by the chances of the ballot, contained each an overwhelming majority of supporters of the Government, the other six might each contain a slenderer majority of members of the Opposition. Thus six of the bureaux with their narrow majorities might nominate six commissioners to outvote the five named by the great majorities in the other bureaux.¹

Before examining the constitution and operation of the Budget Commission, we will look back for a moment at the method of preparing the budget before it is submitted to that body. In the month of October the Minister of Finance performs the first act of preparation of the budget for the next year

¹ This is what practically occurred in the constitution of the Budget Commission of 1896. The ballot put the majority of the bureaux in opposition to the Bourgeois Cabinet, which was contemplating grave fiscal changes; but as a Ministry never commands a stable majority in the French Chamber the danger of an acute conflict was never very great, and the Bourgeois Cabinet followed the usual fate of its predecessors two months later. On the other hand, it sometimes happens that the Budget Commission and others of importance do not contain a single member of the Reactionary groups.

but one: he applies to his colleagues for the estimates of their respective departments, which the permanent staff of the various offices proceeds to prepare. The Minister of Finance having received them, commences to adjust the public expenditure with the revenue estimates made in his own department. It is this rudimentary draft of a budget which he presents to the Chamber of Deputies. However able, however ambitious he may be, his share in the production of the budget practically ceases here. In vain he dreams of winning the fame of a "Robert-Peel"¹ or a Gladstone; he opines that if any fragments of his budget reach the outer air of public discussion, he will no longer be at the Treasury to recognise them, and that possibly his successor will have followed in his wake.²

Even if the Minister of Finance remained in office long enough to see his budget pass through the Chamber, it would be as a spectator, for, as M. Léon Say said in his posthumous work, "The Commission deems itself a Government with its reporters as ministers"—that being the opinion of one who had been seven times Minister of Finance as well as president of the Budget Commission. This important body consists of 33 members, three being nominated by each of the eleven bureaux. The mode of nomination is said to have special disadvantages. If the chances of the ballot have put into one bureau a number of deputies of special competence in finance, all of them but three are perforce excluded from all share in or even knowledge of the preparation of the budget, the sittings of the Commission being

¹ French economists, who have the greatest respect for the memory of Sir Robert Peel, invariably call him in their speeches and writings Robert-Peel, as though that had become his patronymic on the analogy of Casimir-Périer. The French treat the name of the author of *Waverley* in the same way, always referring to him as Walter-Scott.

² Sometimes in the history of the Republic a Minister of Finance has been kept on by a succession of Prime Ministers. In seven of the first fifteen Ministries, from 1872 to 1882, M. Léon Say held the portfolio of finance,—once being undisturbed through three successive administrations. M. Tirard lived through the Duclerc, Fallières, and Ferry Cabinets, remaining at the Louvre from 1882 to 1885. M. Rouvier similarly was Minister of Finance in the successive Tirard, Freycinet, Loubet, and Ribot Cabinets from 1889 to 1892. But though this fitful practice was of advantage to the financial administration of the country, it in nowise assimilated the position of Minister of Finance to that of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

secret. The secrecy of its proceedings adds a factitious importance to this body. It regards itself as an independent council, invested with powers which encroach on the prerogatives of the Chamber, whereof it is merely a delegation, and on the rights of the Executive without incurring any responsibility. Thus the preparation of the budget has ceased in France to be an attribute of ministers. This confusion between the right of control and the right of action, destructive of parliamentary government, is a symptom of the malady which has constantly afflicted French representatives of the people.¹ Under the present regime the unstable duration of Ministries possibly makes an institution beneficial which would be pernicious in a rightly adjusted parliamentary constitution. It is impossible to get out of the vicious circle. Once more we have demonstration that the parliamentary system is unsuited for the uses of the French.

The Budget Commission, after its election by the bureaux, sets to work with resounding parade before subsiding into the mystery of its deliberations. It elects a president, two vice-presidents, four secretaries, a reporter-general, and reporters of all the sub-sections of the budget. The president is usually an ex-Minister, and frequently an ex-Minister of Finance. On taking possession of the chair he makes a speech, reported in all the journals, in which he refers to the great men who have previously illustrated the high dignity now conferred on him. He also counsels his colleagues to bend their attention to the ingenious or praiseworthy projects of the Minister of Finance. A powerful monarch, promising to consider the petition of his humblest subject, could not be more graciously affable than this private member of Parliament to the minister presenting his budget.

Of equal importance with the president is the reporter-general. When after months of silence the Commission produces its budget, it is he who will unfold it to the Chamber: it is he

¹ In the posthumous work referred to above M. Léon Say puts this very lucidly in a sentence impossible to translate into technical English:—"Si le contrôleur supprime le contrôle pour agir à la place du contrôlé, c'en est fait du gouvernement parlementaire, qui est alors remplacé par le gouvernement du Parlement; ce qui est tout le contraire" (*Les Finances*, liv. i.).

who is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The titular Minister of Finance, whether it be he who drafted the budget or a successor, is in some respects an inferior personage, having been nominated only by the Chief of the State; whereas the real minister, the reporter of the Budget Commission, is the direct nominee of the representatives of the nation.¹

The budget is divided into manifold sections each having its reporter. Reports are prepared of the financial situation, not only of the great public departments, such as Interior, War, Marine, and Education, but commissioners are assigned specially to report upon the Legion of Honour, the "Mint and Medals," the Prisons, Algeria, and other channels of national expenditure. Indeed, the subjects of special reports, all printed and presented to the Chamber, are so many that some of the commissioners have to undertake more than one. Among the names attached to them are found those of ex-ministers, who abound in the Chamber, and of other veteran politicians; but not a few are unknown before their inclusion in the Budget Commission. Here is a powerful cause why the system survives criticism. If a young deputy can induce his bureau to nominate him, he starts on his political career with chances similar to those enjoyed by an engineer in his profession who has passed out of the École Polytechnique with a high number. Not only is it a certificate of capacity, of peculiar virtue in a Parliament which gives office to six sets of ministers in its life of four years; it also is an opportunity for scanning the mechanism of the administrative departments, the commissions being armed with inquisitory powers which put the whole public service in their ken.

It is natural that persons endowed with such high functions should not hurry over their work; so the spring and the summer pass by, and long before the recess is over the Commission is at work again. What it does during all those months is only

¹ The Minister of Finance is called before the Commission, which usually makes its budget coincide with the opinions elicited from him. But this does not always happen, and sometimes it would be impossible; as for example when two Ministers of Finance of conflicting views succeed one another during the sittings of one Budget Commission.

disclosed by the revelations of its members. Its proceedings are as secret as those of the conclave of cardinals which elects a new Pope: nothing is made known but the result of its work. We know, indeed, that the commissioners write books on the administration of the departments confided to their respective inquest, their voluminous reports going far beyond purely financial questions. At all events, when the autumn session arrives, the Chamber has before it, in the place of the budget prepared by the Minister the previous year, a new budget presented by the Reporter-General, so complicated that few deputies who were not on the Commission ever master its details. But the expenditure of a State does not halt while ambitious legislators indite essays on administration; so the Chamber, commencing its tardy discussion and examination of the budget, which will drag over into the ensuing session before it is sent up to the Senate, has to provide for the approaching year with unscientific votes on account.

Delay is not the only evil which results from the time wasted in the investigations of the Commission. Its members, each considering that he has a mandate to reform the department on which he reports, conceive that they are competent to modify the organic laws of the country by means of the budget. For example, the reporter on the Ministry of Justice may deem that the judges of the Court of Appeal are too numerous; so he writes an elaborate treatise in support of his idea, calculated to rank him as a great judicial reformer. Supposing his fellow-commissioners accept his conclusions and recommend the suppression of the judgeships, they will be abolished by the effect of a line in the Finance Act, if the Chambers agree with that part of the report of the Commission. French critics of this sweeping power admire the English system of "a twofold budget, the one established in permanency, the other liable to annual discussion and modification,"¹—the charges laid by Statute on our Consolidated Fund, including the civil list and the judges' salaries, not being annually voted, and not being liable to suppression without special legislation. It has been forcibly pointed out that

¹ M. Jules Ferry : Sénat, 20 Mars 1885.

the Commission of the Budget is competent to remodel the whole military system in France, as by suppressing the pay and maintenance of the troops in their third year in the ranks, it could reduce the term of compulsory service from three to two years.¹ As the Chamber accepts from the Commission most of the articles of its budget, the controlling power of the Upper Chamber in financial matters, rarely though it is used, provides a certain check on the misuse of this power.

Another evil, which is in practice much more serious, is of contrary effect. The custom of increasing the estimates during their passage through the Chamber is not essentially a result of the refashioning of the budget by a Commission ; but the system undoubtedly is one of the chief causes of the improvident finance of the Third Republic. An irresponsible deputy who makes of his report to the Commission a manifesto displaying his genius for administration, finds it easier to advise expenditure than retrenchment. For example, the Commission of the Budget one year recommended the creation of certain judicial posts, and increased the vote for the maintenance of the judicature ; so the spectacle was witnessed, in the Chamber, of the Reporter of the Commission advocating an increase of expense in the maintenance of certain tribunals which the Minister of Justice on behalf of his own department declared was not necessary.² Thus the Reporter of the Budget Commission, though he assumes the powers of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, appreciates the tenor of his duties in a precisely opposite sense.

The suppression of parliamentary initiative in the opening of fresh credits, would, it is argued, be a limitation of the rights of the sovereignty of the people ;³ but meanwhile that specious theory is

¹ M. J. Reinach : Ch. des Députés, 25 Nov. 1895. The following year the report of the Budget Commission on the Ministry of War proposed the fusion of the staffs of the Engineers and Artillery—a reform of most technical character.

² Ch. des Députés, 6 Déc. 1895.

³ In 1893 M. W. H. Waddington, soon after his resignation of the Embassy in London, proposed in the Senate a motion reserving to the Government of the day all initiative in public expenditure. His proposal was treated with disdain by all politicians outside the dwindling group of the Left Centre. The Radical *Justice* said that if members of Parliament were deprived of their right to propose

leading the public finances of France to a condition which would bring a less rich country and a less industrious nation to bankruptcy. Millions of the national wealth are thus squandered by each Parliament on the creation of superfluous posts in a land already overburdened with functionaries, and on public works designed only to advance the local popularity of their promoters. The majority offers no opposition, as deputies vote with reciprocal comity for one another's prodigalities. The Government makes little effort to restrain them, as ministerial responsibility before the electorate for extravagance is unknown in a Parliament where the party system has no place, and where half a dozen Cabinets succeed one another between two general elections. The Senate, indeed, annually emits an academic groan over these practices, but rarely risks its calm by using its power of veto.

All the great native authorities on finance, of every shade of political opinion, from M. Léon Say to M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, have uttered the gravest notes of warning; and no words of an English statesman have been more often quoted of late years in France than those of Mr. Gladstone, when he laid down, in 1866, the sound principle that the constitutional duty of a legislative Chamber is not to augment, but to decrease expenditure.¹ It is not only economists brought up in the English school who have recognised the danger of the system in vogue. In 1881 French

augmentations of public expenditure, "one might as well vote the budget for five or for seven years in advance; for to give the right exclusively to ministers would be the revival of absolute power, the resuscitation of the Old Regime."—August 28, 1893.

¹ Since this page was written the ruinous financial policy developed under the Parliamentary system has been strikingly exposed by politicians devoted to the Republic. Its chief denouncer is M. Jules Roche, who has been an Opportunist deputy since 1881, and a Minister in two Cabinets. With great ability he has essayed to organise the alarm felt in the country at the prospect of financial ruin. He has founded "*La Ligue des Contribuables*"—a Taxpayer's League to protest against the extravagance of Parliament. It is not likely to have much practical effect in a country where public opinion has no force. Yet the facts enunciated by the Association are grave enough to spur electors out of their apathy. M. Jules Roche points out that, after a quarter of a century of Parliamentary government in France, the national debt has increased, since 1874, by 10 milliards of francs (£400,000,000 sterling), while in the same period the English Parliament has decreased its national debt by 1250 millions of francs (£50,000,000 sterling). No more eloquent condemnation of the working of the Parliamentary system in France has ever been pronounced.

[Note to Edition of 1899.]

budgets, though only ten years had passed since the levy of the crushing war indemnity, were models of economy compared with the swollen estimates of to-day, unprecedented in Europe in time of peace. Gambetta then, with singular foresight, anticipated the abuses which have expanded since his death, and in his project of revision proposed that to the Chamber of Deputies should be conceded the last word in parliamentary controversies on finance, in consideration of its renouncing its power either to increase any estimate in the budget presented by the minister or to open any new credit.¹ That privilege will last as long as the parliamentary system, of which, however, it may hasten the term ; for, failing war, or other extra-parliamentary cause of revolution, the nation, for all its wealth, industry, and thrift, will be forced one day to seek relief from the ever-swelling burden laid on an unexpanding population.

IV

After the general and detailed discussions of the budget, the interpellations addressed to the Government form the subject of the most conspicuous debates of the Chamber. The practice of interpellating the ministers is a growth of the Republic. It was scarcely known in the parliaments of the Restoration or of the July Monarchy. Under the Second Empire, as the practice is founded on the theory of ministerial responsibility, the right was conceded to deputies only when that regime tried to assume a constitutional mask in its last days.² The effect of an interpellation is somewhat similar to that of a motion to adjourn the House

¹ *Le Ministère Gambetta*, par J. Reinach, l. iv. c. i. The secretary of Gambetta reveals that this proposition in his original scheme of revision was rejected by his own colleagues in his short-lived Ministry,—a fact which is not surprising judged by the subsequent parliamentary history of certain members of the Grand Ministère.

² M. Jules Simon, shortly before his death, wrote an article defending the practice of the Republican Opposition under the Empire of interpellating the Government on every occasion after the right had been conceded, while he condemned with equal vigour the same practice under the Republic. "Under the Empire," he said, "the Executive was all powerful, and it was necessary to resist it ; under the Republic it is languishing, and it ought at any price to be fortified."

in the English Parliament. The right of permitting or of vetoing an interpellation is left to the discretion of the Chamber ; but as a Government has rarely a majority on which it can absolutely rely, the House is not often in a disposition to deny itself its favourite diversion of seeing a minister baited.

In the days when M. Clemenceau was the chief wrecker of Ministries the debates roused by interpellations were often disorderly, and the destructive practice, organised with science, made chronic in the parliamentary system the malady of ministerial instability. But though the periodical scenes of uproar, amid which successive Cabinets fell, were undignified, they were provoked by questions and controversies pertaining to legitimate politics. The method of discussing them was unbecoming ; the result of the debates was unsatisfactory ; but they did little more harm than that of proving to the world a never-controverted fact, that the French are not a parliamentary people.

Of late years a new use has been found for the interpellation. It has been treated by deputies as an instrument of accusation against their colleagues. The Chamber has been turned into an irresponsible tribunal in which the interpellating member assumes the air of a public prosecutor to disguise his true function of delator. From the aspect of the Chamber at such a moment may be learned why the Republic lacks prestige, and why, notwithstanding, it has lasted so long. Moreover, in illustrating once more the incapacity of the French to use parliamentary institutions, it shows, to those who know France, how little the elect of universal suffrage represent the better qualities of the nation.

The subject of the stormy debate which we will follow is unhappily not novel—the right of a minister or legislator to accept pecuniary advantages from the promoter of a commercial enterprise, the existence of which depends on the favour of Parliament. The tone of the discussion is painful to any lover of representative institutions or of France. In a great commercial community, where the industrial class is as upright as it is intelligent, and where experts on financial subjects are so esteemed

that the special term "economist" connoting their craft has been classical for over a century,¹ it might be thought that calm voices of authority would be raised in the popular Chamber to elucidate such a point of ethics. But, as we have seen, the representation of the people is not confided to such as them. It might be expected that opponents of the Republic would in sober accents deplore the recurrence of scandals, bringing discredit on France, which have been more conspicuous under the present regime than under the preceding monarchies. But from the Monarchical benches nothing arises but incoherent cries of applause or abuse; and the domestic brawl between Republicans will not be interfered with.

The matter is brought forward by a leader of the Socialists, a fluent master of words. His oratory, of the style of the pretentious denunciations of the Convention, has sufficient force to call forth thunders of applause from almost every bench when he inveighs against political corruption, though he declares it to be the result of the social system—of which he and his applauders are typical representatives. His scathing declamation brings to the tribune one of the accused deputies. It is not the first time that he has been at bay with the Chamber on a similar charge, and it is not for a stranger to judge of his culpability. His bold attitude before a hostile auditory compels a certain sympathy. One of his interrupters, member for a constituency adjacent to his city of origin, flings at him the pregnant insult, "You had not a sou when you first took to politics." This affords him the occasion for a rhetorical retort, not unplausible, to the effect that had he applied to his own business the time and energy he had given to public affairs he would be in a happier position of fortune than at present.

Yet it is by no means certain that the peculiar adroitness leading to political reward under the Third Republic is of the

¹ The word *économiste* in its technical signification is used by Voltaire in 1773: "Si M. Necker blâme les économistes d'avoir dit du mal de Colbert il me paraît qu'il a raison" (*Lett. de la Harpe*), and there are earlier instances of its use applied to Quesnay and the *physiocrates*, the precursors of Adam Smith.

nature to induce solid commercial prosperity. Moreover, apart from sordid suggestions of profit-making from office, it must be remembered that this man, during a term of years, as successive Governments fell, had the satisfaction of knowing that he was the minister who could not be spared without a disturbance in the markets of France which waited on his words. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that his grasp of power, his wide celebrity for a season, more than made up for the remuneration possibly gained in years obscurely passed in a provincial counting-house.

The debate is concluded by the Prime Minister of the moment, a man of refined features. He wearily gives an official assurance that no governmental pressure has been put on the magistrates investigating the case, while he seems to glance across to the diplomatic gallery. The German Ambassador, who impassively sits there, will not have to inform his Imperial master to-night [that the portfolios of War and of Foreign Affairs are again changing hands. The Ministry has been in office barely two months; so, its hour of dissolution not having arrived, "the Chamber, confident in the assurances of the Government, passes to the order of the day." The sole result of the sitting has been to expose another scandal to Europe without the least light having been thrown on the falsity or the truth of the accusations made at the tribune.¹

V

No matter what the character of the debate, a sitting of the French Chamber always presents one agreeable feature which is wanting in the House of Commons. Whatever the question at issue, scandalous or serious, domestic or exterior, a sitting is

¹ The Chamber elected in 1898 has since these pages were written gone far beyond its predecessors in the abuse of interpellations. The practice has so demoralised the deputies that they neglect the sittings unless the discussion of a scandalous affair gives promise of a tumult in the House. The Dreyfus case has been made an eager pretext not only for brawls in the Chamber of unparalleled violence, but also for flagrant contempt of the principle of the separation of the powers—interpellations having been accepted by Ministers on details of judicial procedure entirely beyond the competence of Parliament.

never unduly prolonged. With rare exceptions it is begun and ended between the digestion of the mid-day repast and dinner-time. However grave the crisis depending on the debate, in the words of the official authority on parliamentary procedure, "When the usual hour of adjournment has arrived, or the Chamber seems visibly fatigued, the President consults the House on the day, the hour, and the object of the next sitting."¹ The House of Commons has borrowed the closure from France, because its members required an artificial check on their obstructive loquacity. It existed in the French Chambers not because legislators needed a bridle on their tongues, but because they liked a methodical manner of closing the sittings at a wholesome hour.² Individual orators are verbose, but they are few. Indeed their malady is considered so innocuous that the regulations permit the President to suspend the sitting for an interval, at the request of an orator whose voice is tired with an already long speech, in order that he may renew his forces to complete his projected harangue. Moreover, not only is the reading of speeches permitted, but a member may read from the tribune the discourse of an absent colleague, provided he approves its sentiments.³

The fact that the President directs and determines the proceedings of the Chamber in a manner unknown in parliaments where a minister is the leader of the House, may partly account for the expeditious brevity of sittings, for the prolonging of which no political reasons exist. On this point, as on others, the regulations of the Chamber seem to have been framed in anticipation of ministerial instability and absence of party system. The Prime Minister of the moment is in no sense leader of the Chamber. Still less is there a leader of the Opposition, or an Opposition front bench. Consequently it is the President of the Chamber who has to arrange the order of the day, consulting the

¹ Pierre, *Droit Politique et Parlementaire*, 795.

² Night sittings are very rare in the Chamber. If there are arrears of work to be cleared off, it sits in the morning from nine to twelve, instead of prolonging the afternoon sitting into the night. The French have a great objection to transacting business at night, but, on the other hand, they make much better use of the morning hours than we do.

³ Pierre, *Droit Politique et Parlementaire*, 890.

Prime Minister, but only as he consults the presidents of commissions, and even the presidents of groups.

Excessive talking is so far from being the weakness of French members of Parliament, that in order that a question may be thoroughly discussed experts are summoned from outside to explain to the House its technical points. The intervention of strangers in a debate seems less anomalous in a Legislature where ministers, some of whom are members of neither House, sit in both Chambers. The practice of designating commissioners to aid the Government in submitting measures to Parliament dates from the Restoration. It is justified for reasons which are curious from the English point of view. It is said to be inevitable where the Executive of a nation takes part in the Legislature; because if it be the duty of a minister to present laws to Parliament, to expound and to defend them, he must necessarily have coadjutors to aid him in this heavy task, which otherwise would hinder his attending to the administration of his department.

Each commissioner of the Government is by decree of the President of the Republic appointed specially for the debate in which his assistance is required. Sometimes he is summoned for the discussion of sections of the budget, sometimes for the explanation of a measure of technical character. The commissioner takes his place at the tribune as though he were a member of the House. His speech usually belongs to that species of oratory, excelled in by the French, which they call a *conférence*,—a word not suggesting the arid dogmatism which we associate with the word “lecture,” but a lucid exposition adorned with happy illustration, and moulded in conversational form. Thus the Governor-General of Algeria may analyse before the Chamber the budget of that dependency, in a discourse on its resources and progress which would delight the Royal Geographical Society; or a scientific soldier may explain the mechanism of a new weapon of destruction in a manner to charm the United Service Institution.¹ Even if members of the

¹ Occasionally the commissioner of the Government is carried away by the

House of Commons were ever desirous of hearing within its walls the sound of voices not their own, constitutional usage and tradition would raise difficulties in the way of introducing an exoteric orator in the sacred precinct¹ as grave as those experienced by Dean Stanley when he wished to put a Dissenter in the pulpit of Westminster Abbey. Otherwise it might be of advantage to dispense with the spectacle of an ill-informed minister striding down the floor of the House to be prompted by the permanent head of his department, who, a dignified civil servant, sits huddled under the gallery with a mass of provincial sight-seers. It might, however, detract from the prestige of the mother of Parliaments, if strangers on returning to their native lands were to record that the most pleasing and the most business-like speeches which they had heard in the House of Commons were delivered not by members of that venerable body, but by the Chief Constructor of the Navy or the Secretary of the Local Government Board.

If the system of debating by proxy presents certain advantages none can be imputed to that of voting by proxy. In the House of Commons the method of taking divisions renders it materially impossible for absent members to vote except by the usage of pairing. This system is incomprehensible to the French. Their text-book on parliamentary procedure says of it, "In our country of logic and good sense we cannot grasp the idea of giving votes in advance"²—a dictum which unconsciously explains their inability to adopt the party system. Nevertheless, in the French Chamber votes are bestowed in advance in a more wholesale manner than in the House of Commons. In principle, members present at a sitting have alone the right to take part in divisions ;

ardent atmosphere of the Chamber, and forgetting his official impartiality rallies individual deputies as though he were a colleague. Thus Colonel Laroque, who was appointed to explain to the Chamber the mechanism of certain quick-firing guns, was called to order by the President for observing that in his opinion he had done more for the artillery than all the speeches of an eminent deputy who had taken up the subject (Ch. des Deputes, 28 Jan. 1893).

¹ There is, of course, no analogy between this practice and the right which the House of Commons sometimes exercises to summon strangers to speak at the bar, which, moreover, is outside the precinct of the Chamber.

² Pierre, *Droit Politique et Parlementaire*, 1023.

but in spite of the strong protests of certain Presidents, the practice of deputies voting for their absent colleagues is established and is too convenient to be in danger of abrogation. Each deputy is furnished with voting tickets, white and blue, on which his name is printed. When the attendants of the Chamber hand to him the urn as he sits in his place, he puts in it a white ticket to signify "Aye," and a blue to signify "No." But when the numbers are proclaimed by the President, they are often palpably in excess of the handful of deputies present. The explanation is that many of the members have their desks (of which each deputy has one in front of his allotted place) full of the tickets of absent colleagues to dispose of at their discretion. The abuse could not be carried to an extreme without the connivance of the President and his bureau. The regulations distinctly say that no division can take place unless a quorum, that is to say an absolute majority of the entire House, be present; but in practice it sometimes happens that as many as 500 members are credited with having voted on a measure of importance when not fifty were in attendance.¹ It is, however, competent for forty deputies present in the Chamber to sign a requisition that a division may be taken by public vote at the tribune, and in that case a member can vote only after answering to his name. The elaborateness of the process prevents it from being put into frequent practice; but it is sometimes made use of by the members of a group, who, remarking that their opponents on a matter under discussion are not present in strength, use it to snatch a victory.

If members are not assiduous in their attendance they are tenacious of their seats. Resignations are extremely rare, though the only formality required is the despatch of a letter to the President, who, having communicated it to the Chamber, intimates to the Ministry of the Interior that the seat is vacant. Tenacious also are deputies of their privileges, though they have a tendency to use that word in a sense unknown in the land of the birth of

¹ The *Journal des Débats* of June 11, 1893, described the division of the previous day on an Employers' Liability Bill, in which votes of 516 members were recorded, while there were barely fifty present, and called attention to it as an abuse of frequent occurrence.


parliamentary privilege. That the Minister of Justice should, before the prosecution on a criminal charge of a member of either Chamber, have to ask the House to withdraw from him his parliamentary immunity,¹ is an adaptation of a constitutional form of respectable tradition from another land where privilege of Parliament has had a real significance in the national history. But many members conceive that a deputy is a privileged citizen outside the precinct of Parliament in all relations of civic life.

This conception reflects the spirit pervading the French Legislature, which is born of the confused political history of France for a hundred years. There never has been and there never will be a State in which the separation of the powers is clearly defined according to the rigid lines of theorists. In the best-ordered constitution there must always be overlappings of jurisdictions and oversteppings of boundaries. The most effective assurance against confusion of the powers and against acute conflict between them is a strong Executive or a long tradition. The latter is beyond the reach of a parliamentary Government in France; the former, if restored, would probably reconstruct beyond recognition French parliamentary institutions.² But while neither of those restraining forces exists, the wonder is that the usurpation of functions beyond its province by the legislative power is not even more aggressive.

¹ The Chamber seems to be unduly sensitive on this subject, considering how dependent the Executive and the Judicial powers are on the Legislature. In 1892, during the Panama affair, a Government was upset and a Public Prosecutor made to retire because the Chamber insisted on having submitted to it the indictments not only of deputies, but of other persons accused of malpractices in that affair. The incident showed that privilege of Parliament is not what we understand by that expression. It also was an example of the confusion of the Legislative and Judicial powers under the Third Republic, which culminated in 1899 in the passing of the law to transfer the Dreyfus case, while in course of investigation, from the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation to the jurisdiction of the whole Court.

² M. Jules Ferry, in the debates on the Revision of the Constitution in 1884, expressed that opinion. After pointing out that the Constitution of the United States, which had been quoted as most favourable for effective separation of the powers, could not with its Federal system provide any example for France to follow, he said: "Dans un pays centralisé comme l'est le nôtre, dans un pays unitaire où l'administration est aussi forte, cette indépendance de l'exécutif vis-à-vis du législatif conduirait vite à la domination de l'exécutif sur le législatif."

Here is a Parliament, not the gradual construction of ages, but a new fabric run up swiftly and fortuitously, which has to seek its precedents and procedure in regimes swept away, which with no tradition of its own is constantly bidden to find its models in the Revolution. It is not strange that its members, to whom the judges of the land look for promotion, should conceive that they form a high judicial tribunal like their forerunners of the Convention. Here is a democratic Legislature existing side by side with a centralised administrative Government, organised for manipulation by one strong hand. It is not surprising that a deputy, often finding himself of greater importance than a passing minister, should deem it his proper function to govern, to administer, and to direct by the agency of the bureaucracy which he nominates. Here are ministers who, endowed for a moment with vast powers, unknown in constitutional countries, are after a fleeting touch of them dismissed by the caprice of deputies whose parliamentary practice authorises them to regulate and investigate the departments of the State. The inevitable result is confusion between the legislative and the executive powers, so inextricable that the constitutional revision to remedy it could scarcely be initiated without a revolution.



CHAPTER V

MINISTERS, MINISTRIES, AND THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM

I

A STRANGER arriving one Sunday by train at a French provincial city observes an air of unwonted animation in the station. Outside in the courtyard, usually occupied by the omnibuses sent from the hotels for the commercial travellers, their chief patrons, is drawn up a squadron of cavalry; while the straight avenue leading to the town is lined as far as the eye can reach with the red and blue of the infantry. The scene is as pleasing as it is unexpected. The word of command in the morning air, the sound of bugle and of trumpet, the flash of steel and glow of uniform in the sunlight, send a thrill through the spectator who recognises the cuirassiers of the deadly charge at Reichshofen, and the colours of the foot-soldiers which had been carried to victory at the Alma and Solferino before the fatal day of Sedan. What patriotic festival has he lighted on, the wayfarer wonders, as the troops present arms to the strain of the Marseillaise, which the coldest critic of 1792 cannot hear without emotion in the presence of French soldiers? But his thoughts of Valmy and Jemmapes are disturbed, for as the band crashes out, "Aux armes, citoyens!" a group comes forth from the station. It would seem to have nothing to do with this martial display, but for the attention manifestly paid to it, the central figure being a person of inoffensive mien, as palpably a civilian as the others around him,—all clothed in that attire which in England is called

evening dress, and in France, being worn at interments, weddings, and other solemn functions, is a costume of ceremony by daylight. As the personage drives away saluted by horse, foot, and artillery, the perplexed stranger is informed that it is the Minister of Agriculture come to unveil the bust of a deceased Republican deputy.

Not the garrison alone is called on to honour this member of the Government, who, a doctor by profession, was a month ago as innocent of agriculture as of arms. From the palace by the cathedral comes forth the Cardinal-Archbishop with his Vicar-General, his carriage blocking the way to the prefecture of the procession of the judges, who, like his Eminence, are hastening, robed, to present their respects to the Minister. When some months hence he has retired from the splendours of the ministerial residence to his modest home he will recall two fine sensations of his official existence. The one when, arriving in a town, the order rang out to the troops to present arms to him a man of peace; the other at the prefecture, when a prince of the Church, with conciliating words, bowed before him an anti-clerical freethinker. The contrasts which a minister of the Republic thus experiences recall the adventure of Christopher Sly, with whom he must be disposed to exclaim, "I have had the bravest dream that ever thou heard'st in all thy life." If he be acquainted with the usages of the country of that hero, he will know that the most powerful minister that England ever had, visiting a provincial city on a political mission, would have to walk from the station if the local members of his party did not provide a carriage; while to greet the Minister of War himself not a single volunteer or militiaman would don his uniform.

These signal honours, paid sometimes on a single day to five or six ministers on various points of the territory, are not exacted by the pride of place of the recipients; nor indeed are they a growth of the Third Republic. The homage seemingly paid by army, clergy, and magistracy to the casual holder of a ministerial portfolio is in reality a tribute to the memory of the founder of modern France. In 1804 the statute-books underwent a slight

transformation. The binding, the type, and the paper remained the same, and the revolutionary dating was unchanged. But volume twenty-one, published in "Floréal an XII." comes from the "Imprimerie de la République;" while number twenty-two, issued in "Brumaire," bears the stamp of the "Imprimerie Impériale." The First Consul had become Emperor of the French by the grace of God and the constitutions of the Republic. One of his first acts, given at the Palace of St. Cloud, was the celebrated Decree of Messidor,¹ to regulate public ceremonies, precedence and honours, civil and military, which still determines the State functions of the Third Republic. Certain clauses prescribing the honours due to objects of reverence have fallen into disuse. The Blessed Sacrament, named first in the decree, is now not publicly recognised save when a municipal council prosecutes a priest for bearing it in procession through the streets. His Imperial Majesty, the princes, and grand dignitaries of his house, who are next mentioned, no longer require military salutes. But the ministers, next on the list, flourish in greater abundance than at any period in the history of France; and it is as members of the constituted body founded by the great Emperor that they claim their fifteen guns and their escort of cavalry.

Question one of these Republican politicians as to the significance of the military pomp which acclaims a simple citizen in broadcloth, and he may tell you that it is because he incarnates the sovereignty of the people. Possibly he believes the theory; but whether he holds this doctrinaire fancy, or more humanly dreams for a moment that some of the homage is meant for a statesman of genius on his upward career, he is mistaken. The honours accorded to ministers are a significant relic of the epoch when they were members of the great military household which

¹ Décret Impérial du 24 Messidor, an XII. The Revolutionary Calendar, which came into use in September 1793 (Vendémiaire, an II.) was not discontinued until the end of 1805, when Napoleon had been Emperor nearly two years, the Treaty of Presbourg, dated 5 Nivôse, an XIV. (and for the benefit of the Emperor of Austria, December 26, 1805), being about the last official document on which it was used. Vendémiaire, September 22 to October 21, was the first month of the year, Brumaire, Frimaire, Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse, Germinal, Floréal, Prairial, Messidor, Thermidor, and Fructidor, following in the order named.

superintended the reconstruction of France. If we examine this Decree of Messidor and the others in the volume, we find them countersigned with modest names soon to disappear from the statute-book, when Maret, Secretary of State, and Regnier, Minister of Justice, became dukes,—taking their titles of Bassano and Massa from vanquished Italy, just like Marshals Oudinot and Masséna to whom the conqueror gave the duchies of Reggio and of Rivoli. Napoleon did not adorn these peaceful functionaries with titles of the sound and origin of those conferred on his warriors to prove that to sit on an office-stool was as glorious an achievement as to fight a battle. His system had precisely the opposite aim and effect. He said to his civilian servitors, Do my work well and you shall have the supreme reward within the reach of human beings; you shall be recompensed with the honours otherwise reserved for victorious soldiers. And thus it is because the one tangible result of the Revolution was the reconstruction of France by a soldier that the drums are beat and the cannon fired when a minister of the Third Republic visits a country town.

II

Although it is important to notice that a minister on his travels appears to the populace as the symbol of the Napoleonic settlement of the Revolution, his other attributes differ considerably from those conferred on his predecessors under the Empire. Napoleon's ministers were simply his clerks, with less discretion left to them than to his military lieutenants. A minister of the Third Republic, on the contrary, while he remains in office is invested with absolute and widespread powers. The centralised authority organised by Napoleon is divided in the hands of several ministers whose administration may be regarded as dictatorship in commission—though that term does not fully express the plenitude of a French minister's powers if it implies that he is in their exercise answerable to his colleagues. He is supposed to be responsible to Parliament; but as the parliamentary machine

is not adapted for supervising a bureaucracy, ministerial responsibility takes the form of ministerial instability. If the ministers of France habitually held office undisturbed for several years the most vigilant Parliament would with difficulty control their extensive powers, and so the failure of the parliamentary system has by hazard provided a remedy against ministerial irresponsibility. But for this it would have been better to examine their functions, in conjunction with the attributes of the Chief of the State, as nominally the President of the Republic and the ministers together form the Executive. We have, however, seen that in the most centralised departments of the Government the power is exercised less by its titular head than by deputies or senators, who have acquired an irregular authority in controlling the bureaucratic machine outside their corporate capacity as members of Parliament.

Since 1879 all the ministers of the Republic have been Republicans, chiefly of the Opportunist and Radical groups, and from that date to the formation of the Dupuy Cabinet in 1898, 130 different persons filled the various ministerial posts. As in that interval twenty-seven Cabinets were formed each of about eleven members, it is clear that the same persons have often held office more than once. Indeed during twenty-three consecutive Ministries there was not one which did not contain one or more members of the Cabinet immediately preceding it.

Thus the resignation of a Ministry and the formation of a new one is usually under the Third Republic a mere reconstruction of the Council. The defeated Prime Minister himself has sometimes accepted a subordinate place in the new combination : but a minister has been permitted to hold the same post in successive Cabinets only in offices the prolonged tenure of which puts no inordinate power in the hands of the holder. We have seen how M. Jules Ferry remained Minister of Education for a specific purpose during several Administrations, and how a Minister of Finance has occasionally been left undisturbed in his office, half its prerogatives being appropriated by the Commission of the Budget. Generally when a minister thus retains his port-

folio, it is because he is unformidable and the office unimportant.¹ A striking exception was the retention by M. de Freycinet of the Department of War through five Ministries, from 1888 to 1892 ; but the War Office is considered to present no domestic danger while a civilian directs it. Indeed, M. de Freycinet was left there for the purpose of keeping it out of the hands of a soldier until the passage had been forgotten of General Boulanger, whose first popular glory was partly due to the Imperial Decree of Messidor quoted above, which, according special military honours to the Minister of War, gives an ambitious wearer of an uniform peculiar opportunity of display.

The great offices of central administration are those in which a minister is not allowed to stay long. The Keeper of the Seals has the appointment of eight thousand judges and judicial officers, so a new Minister of Justice is usually appointed with every new Cabinet. The Ministry of the Interior excites the most watchful jealousy. Only once² since M. Grévy's accession has the holder of that office in a fallen Cabinet been effectively kept on to handle the wires which from the Place Beauvau move the administrative Government of France. M. Constans, as the penalty of that privilege, aroused such feelings of disquiet and odium that his three years' tenure of the redoubtable portfolio put an end to his ministerial career. His offence was that he did his work too well. When he was called to the office early in 1889, after General Boulanger's triumphant election as member for Paris, it seemed likely that the Exhibition of the Centenary of the Revolution would be opened by that popular hero, instead of by President

¹ *e.g.* M. Cochery was perpetual Minister of Posts and Telegraphs (a post since abolished), while eight Cabinets fell from 1879 to 1886. M. de Mahy, the Creole deputy for Réunion, being an authority on colonial questions, remained Minister of Agriculture through three Ministries. M. Viette was Minister of Public Works in 1892-93 during four successive Administrations.

² There were two other occasions when, a Cabinet being patched up to linger for a few weeks, the Minister of the Interior was not disturbed. In 1883 M. Fallières and in 1892 M. Loubet each retained the portfolio of the Interior in two successive Cabinets, and in each case the second combination did not last for twenty days. Also at the beginning of the Grévy presidency, M. Waddington retained in his Cabinet M. de Marcère, who had been M. Dufaure's Minister of the Interior in the last Cabinet under Marshal MacMahon. But these exceptions, mentioned for the sake of accuracy, are not important.

Carnot. M. Constans, whose curious past had invested him with a legend of strength and dexterity untroubled by scruple, was called in as the sole strong man capable of upsetting the people's idol, who, five weeks after the entry of the new minister, was in flight. When the Ministry fell, Boulangism being not quite dead, M. Constans retained his portfolio in the new Cabinet, which had an abnormal life of nearly two years. Thus he became the object of malign attack unequalled even under the Third Republic, where the capabilities of an unlicensed press have grown beyond the dreams of anarchy. The rancour of defeated Boulangism, in rooting up buried fragments of his private life, was encouraged by his political allies, who viewed with envious dismay the machine of centralisation worked without interruption by a bold and vigorous hand.

While care is thus taken to prevent a minister becoming master of a powerful department, the same names recur so frequently in the composition of Cabinets that an epithet, not of complimentary sound, has been invented, "ministrable,"¹ to designate the politicians who are oftenest found in ministerial combinations. The most notable example under the Third Republic was M. de Freycinet. Between 1877 and 1892 he was for nearly eight years a minister in ten different Cabinets, over four of which he presided, holding the portfolios of War, Public Works, and Foreign Affairs. Usually the "ministrables" most frequently in office have been politicians less conspicuous, such as M. Fallières, who, in the course of a decade, was a minister for six years, and M. Tirard, who, in a like period, held office for five years, each of them having been Prime Minister. The period

¹ "Ministrable," a word not found in the latest supplement of Littré's dictionary, is formed presumably on the analogy of the Italian *papabile*, though its signification in nowise corresponds with the epithet applied to the cardinals who are thought to have a chance of election to the papal chair. Although "ministrable" is used in an uncomplimentary sense, it is not so offensive as our expression "party hack," as it is applied to capable men who frequently obtain office as well as to mediocrities. The *Journal des Débats*, which is a jealous guardian of the French language, though it is a defender of the parliamentary system, defined a "ministrable" as one who having been a minister can, without too much scandal, take a place in a ministerial combination, adding "pour parler de ces choses il faut oublier qu'il y a une langue Française."

of the Panama scandal introduced a new generation of "ministables." A number of habitual office-holders were involved in it, and several of their best known colleagues died about the same time.

The proportion of members of the Legislature who attain ministerial rank has some bearing on the working of the parliamentary machine, and a comparison between the French and English systems is interesting. While in the twenty years after the accession of M. Grévy in 1879, a hundred and eight different senators and deputies were ministers in the rapidly dissolving Cabinets of France (about thirty posts having been given to persons not in Parliament), in England during the same period sixty-five different members of the two Houses sat in our more durable Cabinets. But we cannot confine the comparison to Cabinet ministers for this reason. In France (since Under-Secretaries after a fitful trial were practically abolished as being useless under a constitution which allows a minister to sit in both Chambers) the Government of the day has consisted of the Cabinet ministers at the heads of the great departments, and of no one else. In England, on the other hand, a Government consists of over forty¹ members of the two Chambers, of whom sixteen on the average form the Cabinet, thirty of the ministerial places being usually distributed in the House of Commons. Thus while in France about 100 different senators and deputies have held portfolios, about 250 different members of the British Parliament have enjoyed office. Moreover, the average annual ministerial salaries received by French legislators have been £20,000,² while the pay of ministers in England has amounted to more than £160,000 a year.

In France there are eleven ministers, all told, who hold the

¹ Not counting the household appointments, as they have no counterpart in a Republic, though some of our nominal courtiers are active politicians who represent in Parliament administrative departments.

² When this was written, a French cabinet of average composition was in office, in which there were seven deputies and two senators, their united salaries at 60,000 francs being 540,000 francs minus 63,000 francs reimbursed by the seven deputies, who, while they are in office, forfeit their deputy's salary of 9000 francs, senators' by a curious anomaly being allowed to cumulate. This makes a total of 477,000 francs—£19,080. But as in England the Lord Chancellor is a minister, the salary of the President of the Senate ought, perhaps, to be added

portfolios of War, Marine, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice, Education, Finance, Commerce, Public Works, Agriculture, and Colonies,¹ of whom the first two are most often not members of Parliament, the Foreign Minister being sometimes in the same case. Thus we may reckon that nine ministerial places are on the average distributed among all the senators and deputies. Two of them are generally allotted to the Senate, so that seven appointments are within the reach of 580 deputies, instead of thirty which usually fall to the share of 670 members of the House of Commons.

It is the Lower Chamber in both countries which generally has the power of reversing Ministries, and we must try to picture the House of Commons under conditions similar to those which prevail in the Chamber of Deputies. We will imagine not that practices were introduced foreign to the British Constitution, such as the faculty given to ministers of sitting in both Houses, or their appointment outside Parliament.² We will merely suppose that ministerial posts were reduced to strict limits of utility, and that the sole holders of places of profit in the House of Commons were seven ministers, and four or five under-secretaries to represent departments presided over by peers. Such a reform, by undermining party discipline, would possibly reduce the British House of Commons to a state of anarchy not far removed from that of the French Chamber.

The House of Commons has of late years shown symptoms of the evils formerly held to characterise continental imitations of the British Parliament—a spirit of disorder and a tendency to

for the purpose of the comparison, though he is never a minister, it being 72,000 francs=£2880. It is difficult to compare satisfactorily the two systems, as all the conditions and features are dissimilar. For example, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland is sometimes a minister with a seat in the Cabinet, and the salary attached to his exceptional post alone amounts to more than all the combined salaries of ministers who are members of the two French Houses.

¹ The portfolio of Public Worship is held either by the Minister of Justice, of Education, or of the Interior; that of Fine Arts is almost always attached to that of Education.

² The occasional inability of an Irish Law Officer to find a seat in the House of Commons does not affect the general strictness of our usual constitutional practice.

break up into groups. The one is to some extent the corollary of the other, and the former evil is kept in check by the party system not less than the latter; as when the unseemly conduct of individuals brings discredit on a numerous body to which they owe allegiance, stronger influences can be exerted to restrain it than if it reflected on the character merely of a small group. Now in the presence of those symptoms, it may be doubted if party loyalty would stand the strain of the extinction of two-thirds of its rewards. If on the meeting of a new Parliament the places bestowed on members of the House of Commons were limited to ten or a dozen, it is scarcely probable that their recipients would be allowed to occupy them undisturbed for five or six years. The best disciplined party would reveal unsuspected material for revolt or schism. It might be thought that in a party of 400 members it would not matter to the rank and file whether 390 of them were uncalled to office or 370. But a lottery offering thirty prizes to 400 ticket-holders is three times as popular as one which gives but ten; and, save a few of the greatest, the places distributed to his followers by an English Prime Minister partake of the nature of prizes in a lottery.

The conclusion to be drawn from this comparison is not that we should put an end to our Junior Lords, and Financial Secretaries and Law Officers, as it is possible that the cost of their superfluous places is an insurance against government by group and parliamentary anarchy. Nor is it that the French Republic should invent a number of useless ministerial posts in the hope that enlarged Ministries would be durable; for during the existence of under-secretaryships the average life of a Cabinet was not an hour longer than after their practical abolition.¹ It

¹ After the establishment of the Constitution of 1875, the appointment of under-secretaries was very irregular, some Cabinets being entirely without them, and some attaching them to the majority of the ministers, but down to their practical abolition in 1886 there was never a Cabinet with its full complement of under-secretaries. From 1886 to 1893 one single under-secretary was attached first to the Ministry of Marine, and afterwards to that of Commerce, for the direction of the Colonies, until a separate colonial department was established in 1894. Again in 1896 an Under-Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs was attached to the Ministry of Commerce, and in 1898 an Under-Secretary was appointed as the Minister of the Interior.

is, moreover, to the credit of the Republic, not usually severe in the repression of useless places of profit, that they were abolished. Their retention might have been pleaded for on the ground of their having introduced to official life some of the most respectable office-holders of the Republic, all but one of its Presidents who had ever held a ministerial portfolio having each commenced his career as under-secretary.¹ The conclusion to be drawn is that the parliamentary system is a complicated construction, the growth of ages, its stability dependent on a combination of conditions which cannot be created at will—traditions, sentiments, anachronisms, and anomalies. The more deeply we examine French efforts to maintain it, the more clearly it appears to be for ever doomed to fail. The party system, we have seen, is one essential for its good working. But the party system requires party discipline, and even if the French succeeded in imitating its organisation for a season, they have none of the materials for its discipline. We, in England, predisposed to respect authority, have to seek it in precedents and practices, and even in abuses, handed down from the past; while the French, who, outside official circles, have not that predisposition, have also to improvise or to borrow their details of parliamentary machinery.

Thus we see that under the Republic, whether Ministries provide many or few places for office-seekers, their instability is unaffected. The result would be the same under whatever conditions the parliamentary system was essayed in France. There are French admirers of representative institutions who firmly believe that their Government could thrive under them if circumstances were changed. They say it is the fault of the Republic; or that universal suffrage is responsible for the character of the ministers successively hurried from office. But France has tried the parliamentary system when the Government was not a Republic, when the franchise was limited, when deputies were not salaried, and when ministers were statesmen

¹ M. Casimir-Périer in the Dufaure Cabinet of 1877, M. Carnot in the Waddington and Freycinet Cabinets of 1879, and M. Félix Faure in the Grand Ministère of 1881.

illustrious throughout Europe—and the lifetime of Ministries was of the same average duration as under the present regime.

After the Revolution of July, Louis Philippe's first Ministry contained a list of names the lustre of which is unsurpassed in any British Cabinet of the century. M. Guizot was at the Interior; M. Molé (with Talleyrand Ambassador in London) at the Foreign Office; at the Ministry of Education was Duc Victor de Broglie; while MM. Casimir-Périer, Laffitte the financier, and Dupin were ministers without portfolios. It is not surprising that the King could not decide which of them to call to preside over the others, or indeed that so talented a combination should have dissolved in three months. M. Laffitte then became the first Prime Minister of the Monarchy of July, and his Government lasted for five months. Then M. Casimir-Périer formed a Cabinet in May 1831, and there are few pages of later French history more pathetic than that describing the struggles of the veteran parliamentarian, who illustrated the bourgeoisie of the Revolution, till he was struck down a victim to the cholera. The crisis after his death lasted for months, and then was formed another marvellous combination. Marshal Soult, with the portfolio of War, presided over it; the Duc de Broglie became Foreign Minister; M. Guizot transferred his talents to Public Instruction, and M. Thiers came upon the scene as Minister of the Interior. That Cabinet had a relatively long life, but it underwent so many reconstructions and changes of Prime Minister that it is not clear when the end came of the famous Ministry of October 11, 1832.

Finally, when the Orleans dynasty quitted France after occupying the throne for seventeen years and a half, it had been aided by the counsels of eighteen Ministries;¹ and if the last of them was long-lived it did not display the advantage of longevity,

¹ This was the calculation of M. Jules Simon, who as a young man was a witness of the numerous ministerial crises and reconstructions of the first part of the reign. The Ministry of October 29, 1840, had an abnormally long life, as in reality M. Guizot was Prime Minister from its formation to the Revolution of February 1848. Nominally he only became President of the Council in September 1847, Marshal Soult having been till then titular Prime Minister. The ministerial instability under the Restoration is mentioned in book iv. c. i. 1.

as when it fell it brought down the Monarchy with it. No doubt the same ministers often returned to office, and the "ministrables" of those days made a better figure in Europe when they were called Guizot and Thiers (each of whom sat in eight Cabinets) than under the Third Republic, when M. Tirard was perhaps the most respectable type of the recurring holders of portfolios. The ultimate effect was, however, even more disastrous than that of the parliamentary regime which this generation has witnessed. The Monarchy of July, which has left its name to a period of commercial prosperity, literary brilliancy, and political eloquence, disappeared in a street-brawl unworthy of the name of revolution,—a catastrophe inexplicable but for the fact that parliamentarism is repugnant to the genius of the French. So we see that under Monarchy or Republic, with a narrow or a wide suffrage, with deputies unpaid or paid, with ministers illustrious or obscure, the parliamentary system in France has had one consistent result,—ministerial instability with its corollary, governmental anarchy.

III

In the fifty years which elapsed after Lord John Russell formed his Government in 1846 only eight men filled the office of Prime Minister of England; while eight different men filled the same office in France in the last seven years of that half century. All that this statement proves is that England has been governed under a regime which suits the national temperament, and that that is not the case of France. Moreover, mere length of days in a Ministry does not necessarily bring to a nation domestic felicity, honour, and abundance. If that were so, the Victorian age would pale before the period when the Regency mellowed into the reign of George IV., under Lord Liverpool's Premiership of fourteen years, the days of the Luddites and of Peterloo, of the trials of Thistlewood and of Queen Caroline. No doubt the converse state of things leads to anarchy; but ministerial stability is not in its essence a public benefit, for

clearly the long continuance of a bad minister at the direction of affairs is an evil. It is of advantage in popular Governments, because it is a sign that the regime is pleasing to the people and that its officers have inspired them with confidence.

There is another species of ministerial stability also cited with admiration in France. When Prince Lobanoff in 1895 became Minister for Foreign Affairs in Russia, it was recorded with envy that since 1813 there had been only three occupants of that high office,—MM. de Nesselrode, Gortchakof, and de Giers ; while France had employed more than enough titularies of the post to supply a new one every other year. M. de Nesselrode's term was so long that to compete with it in France it would be necessary to establish not only ministerial stability, but stability of regime, as it had begun before he came to Paris to negotiate the downfall of the First Empire, and did not end till after the Crimean War. It thus lasted through First Restoration, Hundred Days, Second Restoration, Monarchy of July, Second Republic, to Second Empire. The span of human life, apart from political vicissitude, does not often permit of such experience. But to institute terms of service even as long as those of Prince Gortchakof or of M. de Giers, who together served for the third of a century, France has only to adopt the Russian method of government, or to resume her own form of autocracy, which M. de Nesselrode and his master, Alexander I., took such pains to upset in 1814. The homage paid by France to Russia in the last decade of the nineteenth century has been one of the most curious international spectacles ever presented to Europe, regarded either as the attitude of one great power before another, or as that of a democracy before a despotism. As one deeply attached to France, while watching the phases of the Franco-Russian alliance, and studying French institutions, I have sometimes been moved to regret that France should not go to Russia for her models of government, and to England for her friendships. The latter in any case would not do her the harm she has suffered in her efforts to adopt the British parliamentary system

If nations were subject to the same unjust resentments as

human beings, France might well dislike England for the very reason of having imported an institution modelled on one of hers, and of having found it a failure. It is as though a man, whose affairs had been managed with irregularity, should behold, with envious admiration, a neighbour in the possession of a machine which, patiently constructed and steadily driven, performed fairly well its appointed task, sometimes being improved as new needs arose. He suddenly decides in a moment of crisis to have one manufactured on the same pattern, reckless of the fact that neither the material he has to produce nor the overseers and labourers who will have to work the machine bear any resemblance to those of his neighbour. But he has one swiftly put together by unpractical theorists, with the aid of books, and it starts. It is constantly exploding. It is regarded by the inhabitants sometimes with terror, sometimes with scorn. It periodically kills a manager, and gangs of foremen are at short intervals discharged maimed, while the workmen are perpetually fighting and disfiguring one another in quarrels as to the way of handling it; but it rattles on, sometimes under one class of management, sometimes under another quite different, and never doing a good day's work in any case. Once it was stopped for a season, and no one was any the worse for the cessation; but because the manager who shut it up came to a bad end after partially reviving it, it was brought out again after his dismissal, and patched up to look like a new machine. It has blundered on, with fewer fatal accidents it is true, but with much more din and odour than it ever made, first-class artisans being rarely employed on it in these days.

It is the fault of M. de Montesquieu. Had he never met Lord Chesterfield at Venice, our polite Ambassador to Holland would not have sought him out at the Hague in 1729, and conveyed him in his yacht to England, where his sojourn of two years has had more effect on the history of France since the Revolution than perhaps any other single event in the eighteenth century. The *Esprit des Lois* would have added its legions of Romans and Greeks to the forces of antiquity, which carried on

the French people to upset their Monarchy. But, had Montesquieu not gone to England, there would have been in his immortal work, which, in spite of its fantastic extravagances,¹ turned the course of human thought, no eulogies of the British Constitution among his disquieting praises of the republics of old. The French Republic having turned into Empire after about as many weeks² of duration as the years of the life of the Roman Republic, before it gave birth to the Cæsars, the doctrinaires of the Revolution found their theories upset. So when they scented the coming downfall of Napoleon, they passed by the chapters of the *Esprit des Lois* on the virtues of republics, and pondered those extolling the beauties of the English Constitution. There was no more talk about Athens and Sparta, now associated with the Jacobin Club, the guillotine, and other institutions unknown in ancient Greece. The English Constitution was on the lips of the new regenerators of France in the last days of the Emperor, who disliked England and neglected Montesquieu.³

In 1792 Marie Antoinette, recalling how the King had scouted the idea of his functions being reduced to those of an English monarch, lamented that the British Constitution had not been established in France. But the unhappy Queen regretted many other expedients of a very different order, which might have spared her and hers from the grim abyss, to the verge of which she was already dragged. Mme. de Staël, who related the anecdote,⁴ adds, that for the twenty-five troubled years previous

¹ Voltaire's *Commentaire sur l'Esprit des Lois*, for any one familiar with Montesquieu, provides half an hour's most facetious reading.

² The Republic, on the proclamation of the Empire, May 18, 1804, had lasted 11 years and nearly 8 months, or barely 600 weeks; the Roman Republic is calculated to have lasted between 500 and 600 years. But the Republic really ended on November 9, 1799 (18 Brumaire), after little more than seven years of existence, having been proclaimed on September 21, 1792, though its name was officially retained, not only through the Consulate, but in the first years of the Empire.

³ "Son éducation avait été fort incomplète. Par exemple, il n'avait pas lu Montesquieu comme il faut le lire."—Stendhal, *Mémoires sur Napoléon*. He had, however, read Montesquieu in a fashion in the days of his youth with his compatriot and subsequent enemy, Pozzo di Borgo, who records the fact in his *Notes sur la Corse*.

⁴ *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, 1re partie, c. xx.

to the Restoration it had been the practice for people in France to invoke the British Constitution when they were in distress, and to neglect it when circumstances changed. Yet even at the outset of that period, when the old edifice was overturned in 1790, and when France might have made a new start, could the anarchy have been quelled, the British Constitution, which Necker and other moderate men counselled the Constituent Assembly to establish, was the one fabric which could not have been erected on the ruins of the Ancient Regime. One among many reasons was, that its essential virtue lay in its gradual growth of ages : but the idea of tacking it on, in 1814, to the solid new construction fashioned by Napoleon, was to the last degree empirical.

The accomplished daughter of Necker was one of those who preached its introduction into France, and, referring to Napoleon's rivalry with our country, said that "the only way of becoming equal to England is to imitate her." Mme. de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* appeared after her death, two years after the second and more stable establishment of Louis XVIII. on the throne of his ancestors. She shows how all the Liberals, whether they shared her hatred of Napoleon, or had accepted his rule, were impregnated with the idea that the British Constitution contained elements for the regeneration of all governments. In perusing it and similar works of the period, one sees how it came to pass that the Senate, bidden by the Allies to present a charter for Louis XVIII. to accept when he came to Saint-Ouen, in a day or two drew one up according to English principles and precedents, even before Napoleon had started for Elba. Mme. de Staël, long before her first visit to England, had acquired a deep admiration for our institutions from her father, who, in her childhood, had gone to London before his first term of office. It is due to her bright intelligence to recognise that no one more lucidly than she contrasted the differences in the bases of society in the two countries.

That clearness of view is not perceptible generally in the writings of the constitutional doctrinaires and Liberals, who at this period engaged in the sport of chasing false analogies, which,

diverting in the playing-fields of dialectic, is dangerous when applied to the government of human societies. As Charles I. and Louis XVI. were fated to die by the hands of their subjects, it would have been of benefit to the French people if the English king had fallen at Naseby or been secretly despatched at Carisbrook, like Edward II. at Berkeley; or if Louis had perished at the sack of the Tuileries, or had been massacred the next month like the *Princesse de Lamballe*. For, as the two monarchs were both publicly beheaded on scaffolds after mock trials, it was clear to the French Liberals that the English and the French Revolutions were identical phases in the history of two countries. It did not matter that the causes of the troubles, political, fiscal, and ecclesiastical, were unlike; that the relations of the respective kings with Church, nobility, and people, and the mutual relations of the Three Estates were entirely dissimilar; that no single movement in the two civil wars could be compared; that every circumstance leading to and following the two regicides was different;—England had decapitated her king, France had decapitated hers, therefore the French Revolution corresponded to the English Revolution, the Bourbons to the Stuarts, and so on.

Hence the reflections of the French Liberals on the sequel to the Great Rebellion were auxiliary to the Restoration of Louis XVIII. by the Allies; and when it was accomplished they had no further doubt that every stage of the English Revolution would have its counterpart in France. Thus half a generation later, the dethronement of the legitimate king in favour of another member of the royal family, not next in succession, was prefigured beforehand in artificial public opinion on the lines of the English Revolution of 1688;—the historical parallel being aided by circumstances and by the hereditary willingness of Orleans princes to intrigue against their anointed relatives. Perhaps if the children of Louis Philippe had all died young, like the infants of Queen Anne, M. Guizot would have unearthed some Electress Sophia, sprung from the Bourbon alliances with the Palatinate, to provide a German dynasty for the throne of France, corresponding with our Hanoverian succession. But his analogy-hunting would have

received a check. The nation was sick to death of parliamentary government, and threw itself into the arms of Louis Bonaparte, to be compared with whom no member of the house of Cromwell had existed.

The comparison of the superficial aspects of the two Revolutions is as well known as it is now discredited; but one has to peruse the literature of the time to realise how far the mania was carried by the school which fain would institute a perfect harmony of the Revolutionary gospels of the two nations. There are pamphlets by M. Guizot which, when one comes across them in old libraries, appear to be at first glance historical sketches of past episodes in English history, instead of being polemical essays on contemporary French events—so crammed are they with English names and seventeenth century dates. Here is one, *Du gouvernement de la France depuis la Restauration et du Ministère Actuel*, published in 1820, wherein recur more frequently the names of Southampton and Clarendon, of Ashley and Arlington, than those of MM. Decazes, de Feltre, Royer-Collard, and Camille Jordan, who are, with far-fetched fancy, compared with the statesmen of Charles II. There is another of a year later, *Des Conspirations et de la Justice Politique*,¹ in which M. Guizot transcribes whole pages from Cobbett's *State Trials*; for France clearly could not enjoy her Restoration without a Rye House Plot and a trial of Algernon Sidney, without a Dr. Titus Oates and a Judge Jeffreys. So also, a dozen years later, when the Legitimists had become Jacobites, we find the Chamber of Deputies solemnly discussing the treatment of the Duchesse de Berry by the light of British precedents in the case of the young Pretender.²

It is instructive to study with some detail this curious phase of French history, when on the morrow of Waterloo aspirants to popular favour boldly proclaimed the perfection of British institutions and precedents, because the ministerial instability and other features of governmental anarchy of the present day must

¹ In this pamphlet the preface consists of a translation of Erskine's panegyric of the British Constitution pronounced at the trial of Hadfield in 1800 for firing at George III.

² Procès-verbal des séances de la Chambre des Députés, Nov., Déc., 1832.

be referred to the events of that period. Political France of to-day was made in the generation succeeding the Revolution. The progress of civilisation ; the changes in the material conditions of the population ; certain reforms fortuitously produced, such as extension of the suffrage in 1848 ; the disastrous war with Germany, which left a shadow on the spirit of the people : all these factors must be considered in studying the French nation as a whole at the end of the century. But political France of to-day, though its outward form and aspect have been altered by minor revolutions and changes of regime, examined beneath the surface is the creation of the thirty years succeeding the Fall of the Bastille in 1789. The period may roughly be divided into three stages. In the first was destroyed the Ancient Regime. In the second Napoleon raised on its ruins the solid fabric of centralisation demanded by the temperament and essential to the well-being of the French people. In the third the parliamentary system was imported from England and incongruously tacked on to the national edifice.

The British Constitution deserves most of the praise that has been applied to it ; but its name implies that it is admirable as a working machine within the realm in which it has slowly developed. As the Church of England says of one of its sacraments, it is not intended to be "carried about or worshipped" ; and this is how the French doctrinaires treated it. Far different was the attitude of the founders of the American Commonwealth. All of them were familiar with and appreciative of the merits of the British Constitution. Many of them were the sons of makers of its parliamentary system. Some of them were impregnated with the doctrines of Montesquieu. The result, however, of their experience and knowledge was that they recognised that no mere adaptation of British institutions would flourish even in an Anglo-Saxon community, and they produced a Constitution which is a durable monument of human wisdom. Instead of reading Montesquieu as a mere eulogist of the Constitution of their ancestors, they expounded his treatise rather as a laudatory criticism of the British system, and they took from him, by the

light of their own experience, the principle of the separation of the powers more clearly defined than it ever was in England.

Thus in completely separating the Executive from the Legislature they made impossible the establishment of the parliamentary system, of which an essential feature is the responsibility of ministers to Parliament. As Mr. Bryce points out, the results of their clear division of the legislative power from the executive have been farther reaching than they anticipated. The motive which urged the Americans to keep ministers out of the Legislature was the fear lest it, by the ministers, should become the servant of the Chief of the Executive, who might assume certain prerogatives of the British sovereign which were greater then than now.¹ We have nothing to do here with the developments of the Constitution of the United States ; but if the French doctrinaires had turned their attention to it instead of remaining in indiscriminate ecstasy at the perfection of the English system, the history of government in France during the nineteenth century might possibly have been less chequered.

We must, however, bear in mind the circumstances under which the parliamentary system gained admission to France. The Constitution of 1814 was not like that of the United States, the deliberate work of grave delegates firm in their convictions, discussed at leisure amid profound peace in the calm of the Quaker city—at a time when calm was not yet banished from the American continent. It was the creation of flurried senators, who owed their position to having dissimulated from the Emperor their Liberalism. It was improvised by them in five days amid the wild agitation of Paris, then a camp of victorious Cossacks and Prussians, with Napoleon at Fontainebleau not yet dissuaded from striking another blow to renew the bloodshed which had now reached the walls of the capital.

By the most curious of the ironies of political history, the permission to the French to enter into the privilege of parliamentary government was announced to them by the autocrat of Russia. Talleyrand, always in haste to betray a falling master,

¹ *American Commonwealth*, part I. c. xxv.

had lodged the Tsar at his house. From the rue St. Florentin, on March 31, 1814, was sent to be placarded on the walls of Paris the announcement of the Allied Sovereigns that the Emperor had resumed again his simple style of Napoleon Bonaparte, and that the nation was free to give itself a Constitution—the proclamation bearing the sole signature of Alexander with the countersign of his minister, Nesselrode. After another occupation of Paris fifty-seven years later, a Prince of Prussia, who had first come in 1814 with the Allies, returned as German Emperor. His servant, Prince Bismarck, who had brought him thither, expressed the hope that France might maintain the republican form of government as being more likely to prolong her isolation among the monarchical powers of Europe. One might almost fancy that a similar thought crossed the mind of the sagacious autocrat when he invited the French people to repudiate autocracy. The Russian Emperor was the most urgent of the Allies in forcing the Constitution on Louis XVIII.,¹ discerning, perhaps, that a nation which had never shown sign of

¹ Montgaillard, in his *Histoire de France depuis la fin du règne de Louis XVI.* (Paris 1827), relates that "on the 29th of April, the Emperor Alexander visited Louis XVIII. at Compiègne, and strongly insisted on the King, prior to his entry into the capital, promising by proclamation a Liberal Constitution. Afterwards he sent to St. Ouen three couriers to the King, the last with the message that if the promise were not thus made he should not enter Paris. The proclamation was drawn up (by M. de Talleyrand it was said) and the draft sent to the Emperor Alexander, who corrected two or three passages," etc. Mme. de Stael had written to him on April 28: "Sire, The English Constitution has been from all time regarded by all publicists, from Montesquieu to M. Necker, as the highest point of perfection to which human society could attain." There is no doubt about the Tsar's determination in 1814 that France should have a parliamentary Constitution; but it is not easy to arrive at the mixed motives which impelled the autocrat to be its chief advocate. His tutor Frédéric Laharpe, the Swiss Liberal, had educated him in his ideas, and the Emperor may have had a doctrinaire pleasure in imposing an experiment on a nation outside his own demesne, which he repeated in a modified form and without great success in Poland. According to Pozzo di Borgo, who was left in Paris in 1814 as Russian Ambassador after the departure of the allied sovereigns, the Tsar had greatly at heart the welfare of France; but that, from the point of view of the Allies, meant the inability of France to be a terror to foreign powers, and Europe saw in the re-establishment of the Bourbons under a Constitution the guarantee of a long peace which was imperatively needed. Alexander's particular anxiety was to prevent Austria from becoming paramount in France. No one thought that Louis XVIII. had ten years to live. So the speedy succession was anticipated of Charles X., who was in the hands of the priests, and the Tsar believed the Jesuits

aptitude for parliamentary institutions would find that they demanded such attention as to make improbable its marching to another Austerlitz or Friedland.

IV

Instead of enjoying in peace the fruit of his victories, consolidating his dynasty together with the glories and resources of France, Napoleon by his insensate ambition made the Restoration with some species of representative government inevitable. As it was necessary to restrict the powers of the restored Bourbons, whose impenitent theories were well known, the parliamentary system became the heritage of that difficult period, fated to survive other constitutional importations then essayed. The principle of ministerial responsibility then made its entry into France; for it is needless to take seriously its introduction at the Revolution, when enunciated in the Constitution of September 1791, the King being then prisoner at the Tuileries after the flight to Varennes. One reason for its not having worked well is that, for its well-working it needs a Parliament imbued with traditions. The relations of Parliament and ministers in England are founded on slowly-developed usages and fictions which cannot be put into a new Constitution. For example, the doctrine of ministerial responsibility drafted into a written Constitution cannot be enforced unless it be laid down that the ministers are collectively as well as individually responsible. Otherwise an ambitious political leader to evade the rule need only get himself named minister without portfolio. Moreover, at the outset a Council of Ministers has to be by law established, although the English Cabinet, from which it is copied, has no officially recognised existence.

Again, while the principle of ministerial responsibility to Parliament, borrowed from England, is the one feature which is

to be working at the orders of Metternich. The Tsar no doubt thought that parliamentary institutions might counteract clerical influence, but he also tried to get a personal share in the government of France by doing his utmost to marry his sister Anna Paulowna to the Duc de Berry, an alliance which, opposed by Talleyrand, might have changed the history of the century.

found in all the constitutional regimes set up in France, monarchical or republican, the French have never adopted the English conception of the position and attributes of ministers. The separation of the powers which Montesquieu admired in our Constitution is not clearly defined in France. In England the separation of the legislative power from the executive is in theory so distinct, that ministers sit in the elective Chamber of the Legislature not by virtue of their being ministers, but in spite of that fact. Consequently a commoner who receives an appointment from the Crown has to receive a new mandate from the electorate before he can sit in the Lower House. In France a minister sits and debates in both Houses of Parliament in his capacity of minister. The Constitution permits ministers to be chosen in the Senate or in the Chamber ; but there is no reason, constitutional or utilitarian, for selecting them among members of Parliament. In practice, under the Third Republic, only the three portfolios of War, Marine, and Foreign Affairs are ever given to persons who are not senators or deputies ; but the holders of them are three of the most important ministers, whose conduct in troubled times might have the gravest consequences. Anomalous as is the confused French system, the faculty of appointing experts to fill ministerial posts calling for technical knowledge is not without advantage. Indeed, I have heard a Secretary of State, impatient of the place-hunting solicitations of constituents, declare that to be a minister without being a member of Parliament was the ideal situation of French political life.

But though such ideal situation be filled by a heaven-sent minister he has usually to depart from it after a few months' tenure of it, when the Republican Chamber, interpreting the doctrine of ministerial responsibility in the same spirit as did its Royalist and Orleanist predecessors under the Restoration and the Monarchy of July, upsets the Cabinet. In considering the working of the parliamentary system in France we always get into the same series of vicious circles. If to remedy ministerial instability ministers were no longer responsible to Parliament, the machinery of centralisation might fall into the power of an

ambitious band who would dispense with the Legislature in governing France. Or if the nomination of the ministers, no longer responsible to Parliament, passed, in reality as well as nominally, into the hands of the Chief of the State, he would be subject to the temptation of making himself dictator by nominating his own creatures, who would abet his autocratic schemes by means of the redoubtable machinery confided to them. Consequently there is no remedy under a regime of representative government. Ephemeral ministries must succeed one another at brief intervals; the office of minister must remain in bad odour, and parliamentary anarchy must continue, because France possesses a centralised system of administration essential to her existence, and because the French have an ever-latent longing to be governed by a master.

There is nothing in the Constitution of 1875 which prescribes that a Ministry shall resign in consequence of an adverse vote in the Chamber. All that the Constitutional Law says on the subject is that "ministers are jointly and severally liable before the Chambers for the general policy of the Government."¹ As in England a defeat in the House of Commons usually entails the resignation of a Cabinet, the Government of the Republic would lose its character as a constitutional regime did it not imitate that venerable precedent. To an onlooker the necessity is not self-evident. If a British Ministry defeated in the House of Commons remained in office, the malcontent majority might refuse to vote Supply, and by bringing the business of the country to a standstill might force a dissolution or excite a popular agitation. In France the adventitious majority which puts a Ministry out is no more representative of the nation's opinions, or even of its temporary sentiment, than is the minority which supports it. The voting of Supply, owing to the system of the Budget Commission, has not the same importance in the French Chamber²

¹ L. C. 25 Fév. 1875, art. 6.

² The withholding of Supply can only be used as a means of putting pressure on a Government at certain seasons of the year. When the coup d'état of the Seize Mai 1877 took place Supply had been voted, and Marshal MacMahon could brave the hostile majority in the Chamber; but when in November of the

as in the House of Commons. Moreover, it is never certain that the improvised majority which upsets a Government will retain its unity of action for a week ; while, excepting at crises of acute excitement, such as when M. Jules Ferry fell on the Tonkin question, or when the Panama scandals roused public passion, the fate of a Ministry has no more power to stir popular feeling either in the country or in the streets of Paris than has the election of the mayor of a suburban commune. This is not an exaggerated statement. When it is considered what vast issues may depend on the choice of the persons sent to direct the Foreign Office or the War Office, the indifference of the French public at the change of a Ministry is phenomenal. It is not merely the frivolous cosmopolitan society of Paris, with its disdain for the Republic, nor cultured circles which have no taste for politics. It is the man in the street and the democracy generally that the fall of a Ministry fails to move ; and the news-vendors in the kiosks declare that during a ministerial crisis the sale of journals does not perceptibly increase in the capital.

When a Ministry after a few months' tenure of office is defeated on a question of confidence, the Prime Minister is expected to convey his resignation to the President of the Republic, who urges him to reconsider his decision. On his refusal the Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber are summoned to the Élysée to counsel the Chief of the State. The result of their advice is that on the succeeding days politicians of various Republican groups are sent for by the President, and it is officially announced that one of them is authorised to form a new Cabinet. The English practice is not at this point followed. The member of Parliament so honoured has not his door beset with crowds of anxious placemen. It is he who has to seek out his possible colleagues, and the newspapers record his drives about Paris in a cab in search of a Ministry, until he returns to the Élysée fatigued and usually unsuccessful. The tradition is that the same year he forced upon the new Chamber, after the elections, the Rochebottet Ministry, it was compelled to resign in a few weeks, as the Chamber refused to vote Supply, and the affairs of the country were on the verge of being brought to a deadlock.

first person entrusted with the task shall not succeed. At last a more fortunate essay is made, and the journals announce that a politician of more or less note, though rarely designated in advance by public opinion, has formed an Opportunist, a Concentration, a Radical, or a Moderate Government. To a stranger attempting to study French institutions it, in most cases, appears that the composition of the Cabinet has no relation whatever to the cause of the downfall of its predecessor. Indeed it sometimes happens that places are impartially found in the new one for deputies both of the majority and of the minority in the division which produced the crisis.

After their formal introduction to the President of the Republic, without the administration of oath or other ceremony, the first business of the members of a new Ministry is to take possession of their official dwellings. They are all sumptuously lodged in palaces, or at least have the option of so living during their term of office. The residence of the Minister of the Interior at the Place Beauvau is considered compulsory; for as the chief agent of the centralised power, he ought always to be on the spot to direct it. Of the others there are a few who resist the temptation of brief magnificence, and not disturbing their hearths, never set foot in the gilded saloons excepting to hold an official reception.¹ But as a rule the new ministers, sometimes urged by domestic pressure, like to taste all the joys of their passing greatness, and in this they are perhaps not to blame, in spite of the satire of the wits of the Boulevards. Certain politicians who frequently return to office have a varied knowledge of the charms and deficiencies of the different ministerial residences. They regard them somewhat as a wandering idler compares the furnished houses which he tenants, less inexpensively, one winter at Nice, the next summer at Deauville, and the next season at Pau. In an English ballad, the popularity of which has for many

¹ M. de Freycinet, who was Minister of War for the phenomenally long period of nearly five consecutive years, never went to live in the rue St. Dominique; and M. Méline, who has had an unparalleled length of experience of office, having been an Under-Secretary in the Jules Simon Ministry of 1876, also preferred the security of his own home, as do some of the more promising younger ministers.

years given a debased idea of our poetical and musical instinct, the hero declares his preference for his humble home to the palaces wherein he periodically roams. Such vicissitudes are not within the experience of the British concert-goers who disingenuously applaud the sentiment. Yet he is not a mere creature of the poet's fancy. He is a French minister under a constitutional regime, extracting philosophy from the working of the parliamentary system in France.

The oft-recurring installation of fresh ministers is a fertile subject for Parisian humour. If the newcomer be a "ministrable" who is not in his first term of official life he falls at once into the routine of his department. But the chiefs of the bureaucracy are said to be apt to patronise the inexperienced statesman. First in apparent dignity in a French Government office is the huissier of the minister, who somewhat corresponds in rank to the functionaries known at Whitehall as "messengers," though greatly superior to those worthy servants of the Crown in grandeur and importance; for the ante-chambers of a French minister are thronged with a crowd as vast, if not as picturesque, as that which frequented the corridors at Versailles while the King was being dressed. No wonder that the seekers of place and promotion, or even the senators and deputies who come to protect them, should respect the stately wearer of the silver chain as the personification of stable government. He is always there to receive them when they come in the spring or return in the autumn; whereas the minister who promises a place has often to leave the decree conferring it for a successor to sign.¹

A member of the Embassy at Paris which is reputed to be the best informed, and which has the greatest need to be vigilant,

¹ The tradition of the huissier as the symbol of governmental stability dates from before the Third Republic. The Duc d'Aumale used to relate that his father, at the first reception which he gave as King of the French in 1830, was familiarly greeted by an aged huissier who had been introducing the company to the Royal presence; and he explained that he was on duty in the ante-chamber of Danton in 1792, when the young Louis Philippe brought to the Convention the despatches of Dumouriez announcing the victory of Valmy. The huissier had performed the same functions under all the succeeding regimes with fewer vicissitudes than those experienced by the King.

once said to me that the *huissier* at the Quai d'Orsay was the representative of continuity of policy at the French Foreign Office. The sarcasm, stripped of its offensiveness, has some truth in it, for it was a tribute from unfriendly lips to the debt which France owes to its permanent bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, continuity of foreign policy has been one of the most remarkable phenomena of the parliamentary anarchy of the Third Republic. The cause of it has been recognised by the public, which displayed satisfaction when an accomplished official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who, with his colleagues, had raised the position of France in Europe, was made titular Secretary of State in preference to a politician.

Although the bureaucracy of France has infinitely more to do with the government of the country than has the civil service in England, the position of the most important permanent officials is less conspicuous in Paris than in London. In England each department of the central administration is directed by a permanent Under-Secretary, the perpetual head of the office, whose name as the representative of its tradition is constantly before the public. In France in each Ministry there are several directors, each having under his control a separate branch of the office; and above them all is the casual politician, here to-day and gone to-morrow, but in theory the all-powerful minister, whose nominal attributes, conferred by autocracy, are still the object of outward marks of honour.

If a French minister remained in office for a considerable time, his principal private secretary, the chief of his cabinet, as he is officially called, would become practically the under-secretary of State—the position in an administrative sense having generally a greater importance than the corresponding post in the English public service. This is in accordance with the principle on which the government of France is carried on, under the combined system partly invented by Napoleon and partly imported from England. Although a French minister may not be a person of importance when he takes office, and though he may resume his original condition when he quits it, during its tenure he is

almighty.¹ In Paris lodged like a prince, on his progress through the country he is saluted like a viceroy, journeying at the public cost.² A more futile method of spending public money in honour of ministers deserves mention. If a Cabinet, in temporary command of a majority in either House, be struck with admiration at a speech of one of its members, the Assembly is asked to authorise its being printed and posted among the official proclamations in all the 36,000 communes of France. Why importance is attached to the privilege is difficult to say; for though on many an *hôtel-de-ville* and *mairie*, urban and rural, I have seen placarded parliamentary orations on manifold topics, I have never once been disturbed in my perusal of them by a French citizen, or even by a non-elect of tender years.³

It is difficult to pass a definite judgment on the ability and character of the ministers of the Third Republic. Leaving out of the question Gambetta, who had practically no ministerial experience after the War, and M. Léon Say, who, in the plenitude

¹ The exalted position of a minister during his term of office may be judged from an incident which occurred in December 1898. M. Dupuy, who had become Prime Minister the previous month, was summoned as a witness before the Cour de Cassation,—the supreme tribunal of the land. Instead of his going to the Palace of Justice like an ordinary citizen, the President of the Court had to wait upon him at the Ministry of the Interior to take his evidence.

² The expenses of ministerial journeys sometimes provoke an ineffective debate in the Chamber. M. Yves Guyot, when charged with thus spending too much public money, proved that there were ministers whose journeys were more expensive than his. In 1889 he being Minister of Public Works cost the country £260 for his journeys, while in 1888 his two predecessors together spent £680 in travelling. M. Yves Guyot added: "The ministers never see a centime of the money, most of which goes in presents to railway officials and in entertaining mayors and municipal authorities" (*Chambre des Députés*, 14 Mai 1893). It should be said that the cost of conveyance of ministers, including special trains, has to be borne by the railway companies.

³ The practice was somewhat discredited by the placarding of a speech made on July 7, 1898, by M. Cavaignac, Minister of War, on the Dreyfus case, in which he proclaimed his faith in certain documents which a few weeks later Colonel Henry confessed to have forged. This waste of public money is sometimes accorded by the Chamber to the discourses of private members, as in the case of an unofficial speech of M. Cavaignac mentioned in book ii. c. ii. p. 246. The belief in the advantage of the "affichage" of a speech probably arises from the fact that it was formerly a privilege prohibited to members, even when they offered to do it at their own expense, unless authorised by a vote of the Chamber. Now any deputy can placard his speeches at his own expense or at that of his group.

of his powers, was never included in any of the twenty Cabinets formed during the last fourteen years of his life, it would be rash to say that the regime has produced a politician worthy of the name of statesman. M. Jules Ferry was by far the most capable minister of the Republic after the advent to power of the Republicans. His most marked achievements were first to sow everlasting rancour and division in the nation in carrying his educational measures, and then to draw upon himself unmerited unpopularity in directing a patriotic colonial policy. He thus showed himself destitute of an essential quality of a statesman,—the faculty of gauging the sentiments of the people he is called upon to govern.

The proportion of distinguished men is lamentably small in the Ministries of the Republic. Nevertheless care must be taken not to accept without qualification the picture drawn of ministers by the contemporary French press, which is wont to describe the successive governors of the country as persons of abject character and parts. No doubt few of them represent the best elements in the French nation, and most of them are much inferior to the ministers with whom the Republic commenced its career under M. Thiers. But many, though unsuited to the situation of a minister of France, are men whose abilities might have secured them an honourable position in their professions. Some of them moreover are quite of the social and intellectual level of a new type of English minister, which has of late years been seen in both Liberal and Conservative administrations. It must be borne in mind that as there are no other offices than those of Cabinet rank at the disposal of French members of Parliament, a politician of the class of one who in our country would be a subordinate official for a term of years, is in France entrusted with a ministerial portfolio for a term of months.

Again, the composition of the Ministries must needs reflect the inferior composition of the Legislature. Seven out of the nine members of Parliament in a Cabinet are usually deputies, and our analysis of the Chamber has shown that it

does not contain material for relays of ministers who would do credit to the French nation. From the election of M. Carnot in 1887 to the formation of the Dupuy Cabinet in 1898—not counting the soldiers and sailors who held the portfolios of War and Marine—seventy-five different persons were ministers. Of them about thirty were advocates, seven doctors, seven journalists, seven persons connected with commerce, seven professors, five engineers, and the remainder included ex-functionaries, retired officers, and M. Casimir-Périer, the solitary representative of the wealthy and leisured class. The lawyers and doctors, from whose ranks, as we have seen, come most of the professional politicians, have thus supplied about half the ministers in this period, the lawyers being out of all proportion even to their large number in Parliament. The most generous estimate could not impute distinction to more than two or three of these representatives of law and physic. The professors and the engineers, though only nine in number, include three-fourths of the ministers whose names convey any idea to their countrymen.¹

The result of this analysis seems to be that of the politicians who attain office under the Third Republic the most creditable examples are those who have undergone the technical training of the *École Polytechnique* or the University; that few of the lawyers, doctors, and other professional politicians rise above mediocrity; and that there are scarcely any men of business among them whose commercial aptitude would fit them to administer a department of the State. To one acquainted with

¹ MM. Méline, Brisson, and Floquet were the best known advocates who have been ministers during the period: none of the doctors are famous. Most of the professors and engineers have been men of ability. Of the engineers MM. de Freycinet and Cavaignac, both, like M. Carnot, pupils of the *École Polytechnique*, were much above the average of ministers. The most distinguished of the professors were MM. Berthelot, Constans, Burdeau, Dupuy, Lebon, and Rambaud. The last two became ministers immediately on entering the Chamber and Senate respectively. If M. Lebon be reckoned as a professor, perhaps M. Ribot, whom I have counted as an ex-functionary, should be added, both of them having been lecturers at the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques*, and not in the public service of the University, which strictly alone gives the title of professor. Of the journalists who have become ministers MM. Delcassé and Lockroy are the best known.

the different phases of French society, the contrast is painfully striking between the level of intelligence of political circles and that of the financial and industrial world. At Lyons, at Bordeaux, and other industrial or commercial centres, the men who develop the wealth and maintain the prestige of those cities by their high character, their public spirit, and their manifest ability, seem to be designated to direct the affairs of the country; but if by rare chance one of them is elected to Parliament he remains a private member.¹ It would almost seem as though the taint of trade were as grave an obstacle to entering a Radical or Opportunist Cabinet under the Republic as it was under the Old Regime to getting a commission in a royal regiment of nobles.

M. Félix Faure, for example, the President of the Republic, was a man of better parts than nine-tenths of the lawyers, doctors, and journalists who were ministers during the fourteen years that he sat for Havre. Yet though he showed, by accepting under-secretaryships, his willingness to take office, he never attained Cabinet rank until six months before his election to the supreme power. During those years, in twenty consecutive Cabinets, in only three of them was the Minister of Commerce a man of business.² The direction of the department of trade by men versed in commercial affairs would not save the commercial supremacy of France on the Continent; but it is significant that she has lost that position during the heyday of the parliamentary regime. It is certain that under no other system the administration of the laws which in France stringently regulate the national commerce and industry would have been allowed to remain in inexpert hands at such a crisis.

¹ *e.g.* M. Aynard, a distinguished banker and leading citizen of Lyons, who had as little chance of being included in a Cabinet as M. Léon Say, to whose school he belonged.

² The Minister of Commerce is sometimes chosen for curious reasons. One politician who held that office in two Cabinets was a provincial engineer chiefly known in Paris as a composer whose operas had brought him into conflict with a theatrical manager. President Grévy insisted on a portfolio being given to one of the deputies of a department which had strengthened the Republican cause, and this accident put the Ministry of Commerce into the hands of a musician.

In finding fault with the exclusion from public affairs of the most practical class which France produces, I am not advocating the principle, never accepted in England, that a minister should be chosen for professional qualifications. Indeed, while under the Third Republic lawyers administer the Ministry of Commerce, and doctors that of Agriculture, in certain departments that principle is strictly recognised. The practice of setting an admiral over the Navy, and a general over the Army, has, as we have seen, been followed by the appointment of a Foreign Office official to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By a curious paradox the press had accepted with equanimity for many years the appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of manifestly untrained politicians. One had been Minister of Agriculture, another was strange to office, a third was a provincial lawyer. Yet when one day a man of science of European renown was sent to the Quai d'Orsay the uproar raised was such that one unacquainted with the history of the Third Republic might have thought that under it the exterior policy of France had been directed by a series of Metternichs or Bismarcks. If M. Berthelot was not an ideal Foreign Secretary, he was superior to many of his predecessors, and he was well spoken of by both French and foreign diplomatists. Nevertheless, it being rare for a politician to be known by name beyond France in any capacity, the journalists made merry over the idea of a chemist being Foreign Minister. To an onlooker the attacks seemed to be directed not against the inappropriateness of the appointment, but against the personal eminence of the man above the mediocrity which seems to be accepted in political France as the necessary standard for its rulers.

The rife spirit of revolt against distinction and superiority receives satisfaction from the results of the parliamentary system. The wonder is that France is not worse governed under it. It must be acknowledged that, considering who the majority of the ministers are, and what has been their previous training, they acquit themselves with remarkable success; that is to say, they get through their brief terms of office without serious mishap.

This is in chief measure due to the organisation of the bureaucracy ; but it may also in part be accounted for by a certain instinct which the French undoubtedly have for improvising political functions. An English usher of lowly birth who, after rising to be assistant-master in provincial grammar-schools, got into Parliament, would probably be both uncomfortable and ridiculous if he found himself Prime Minister seven years later. When this happens in France the promoted schoolmaster, without any pretension to singular talent, gets through his work at the Place Beauvau and at the Palais Bourbon with as easy assurance as though he were teaching a class in a country Lycée.

This is a tradition of the Revolution. When all the sons of the new era considered that politics began in 1789, it was evident that in 1790 no one, whatever his age or experience, could have had more than a year's political training. The guillotine, and later Napoleon, hindered the experiment being tested of the production of full-blown statesmen without preliminary cultivation ; but the theory survived. At the outset of the change of things Dumont of Geneva, the interpreter of Bentham, who knew England and France equally well, having been the tutor of Lord Shelburne's children at Bowood till he came with Romilly to Paris, where he became the friend and helper of Mirabeau, wrote : " If a hundred people in London and in Paris respectively were stopped in the streets and asked to undertake the government of the country, ninety-nine would refuse in London and ninety-nine would accept in Paris,—a Frenchman believes himself capable of tackling all difficulties with *un peu d'esprit*." I know not if that modesty lingers in England ; but the buoyant confidence of the Constituent Assembly still abounds in France, and is extremely useful to the working of the brief-ministry system under the parliamentary regime. The Revolutionary time inspired ordinary men with confidence to undertake with a light heart even mightier responsibilities than the direction of a Ministry of the State. States themselves had rulers improvised for them in France in that astounding epoch. When it was coming to an end, Joseph Bonaparte, having been law student

and army commissary, King of Naples and King of Spain, and having descended from both thrones even before Fontainebleau and Elba, used to criticise the acts of his Imperial younger brother. He would even complain that had it not been for Napoleon he would have continued peacefully his reign till the Escorial claimed him. "Nothing astonished Joseph in his incredible fortune," said one who had heard him speak. When one thinks of the vicissitudes of those vertiginous days, it is not surprising that Frenchmen and sons of the Revolution accept placidly such minor gifts of fate as are distributed under a parliamentary regime.

CHAPTER VI

CORRUPTION UNDER THE REPUBLIC

I

AT the entrance of the most imposing of the avenues which flank the Champs Élysées there stands a substantial house of somewhat pretentious architecture. The stately thoroughfare named after the victory of Napoleon most cherished by the French abounds in sumptuous dwellings, so in the Avenue d'Iéna this hôtel is not conspicuous among its neighbours. Yet it is endowed with a notoriety painful to passers-by who are honest lovers of the Republic, whose President reared these walls with savings gathered, it was said, during his tenure of the chief magistracy. The suspicion that M. Grévy had turned his high office to profit, and the certainty that he had allowed a near relative to make of the Élysée a centre of corruption, would have infallibly terminated the Republican regime in France had not its opponents acted with that combination of feebleness and baseness which characterised the Boulangist movement. It is not necessary here to recapitulate the incidents which drove M. Grévy from power. The Wilson scandals were a few years later made insignificant by others which showed that political corruption was widespread in the Republic; but the tradition attaching to the house to which the President retired makes it a sad monument to warn doctrinaires that virtue is not the special appurtenance of any one form of government.

The association of purity of morals with the Republican form

of government, for which history furnishes no justification, is one of the most striking results of the pseudo-classical basis of the French Revolution. Like many other influences which have turned the course of history in modern France, much of it may be attributed to Montesquieu. Before Rousseau began to upheave society with his sentimental sophistries, the author of the *Esprit des Lois*, with illustrations from antiquity, had declared that virtue is not the principle of Monarchical government and that morals are purer in a Republic.¹ The French theorists of the eighteenth century and their disciples did not as a rule go to original texts for their ideas. They contented themselves with translations and versions ; and it is a curious fact that two priests and courtiers, born at an interval of two hundred years, were perhaps the chief agents for disseminating in the kingdom of France the theory of the virtuousness of the Republics of Greece and Rome. One of them, a humanist of the sixteenth century, Jacques Amyot, was tutor to the sons of Henri II. when he finished his *Plutarch's Lives*, for which his pupil Charles IX. made him grand almoner. The other, the Abbé Barthélemy, owed to the Court the thirty years of leisure needful to produce his *Travels of the Young Anacharsis in Greece*, which attractive picture of life in the Athenian Republic was published on the eve of the Revolution.

Five years earlier, in 1783, had appeared a popular new edition of Amyot's *Plutarch*. Its title-page announced that it was printed "with the approbation of the King," whose downfall was to be hastened by this publication, which put into the hands of the theorists concrete figures to drape with the vague doctrines of Rousseau. The classical allusions which inflate the oratory of the Revolutionary Assemblies are mostly drawn hence or from *Anacharsis*. Indeed the author of the latter owed his escape from the massacres of September 1792 to the renown of his book, which had enabled the overturners of the Monarchy to evoke the humanity and purity of Republican government, whereof Marat and Danton were the first exemplars. When

¹ *De l'Esprit des Lois*, l. iii. c. 5, and l. iv. c. 2.

Charlotte Corday came from Caen the next year to send the former to his fate, in her scanty baggage she brought a volume of Amyot's *Lives*. Of Madame Roland one who had seen the Revolution wrote: "She devoured Plutarch and St. Augustine: her spirit became Republican and her soul Christian." Thus in every phase of the Revolution, in every party, all who took part in it were steeped in the pseudo-classicism of which the first superficial principle was that virtue could only thrive under a Republic, so that M. Brunetière, who sometimes puts verities in epigrammatic form, once said to me: "It was Plutarch who made the French Revolution."

It is needless to indicate the falseness of the analogy which the theorists of the last century drew between the republics of old, with their servile populations, and modern democracies, every member of which was to have equal rights. Moreover, all that was corrupt at Athens, as well as all that was beautiful and good, developed under republican institutions; while at Rome, long before the sombre narrative of Tacitus and the vehement stanzas of Juvenal had portrayed for posterity the Empire at its zenith, pens not less immortal had related the enormities of Catiline and of Clodius, both products of the Republic. The very sound of that word to doctrinaires seemed vaguely to suggest virtue. Its meaning no one quite apprehended, and even Montesquieu defined it in a manner which might include the British Monarchy as at present constituted.¹ In our country the austerity of the Puritan Commonwealth, succeeded by the reaction of the Restoration, gave a certain plausibility to the theory. But the Protectorate of Cromwell was rarely cited by the forerunners of the French Revolution, who neither admired its ethical doctrine nor regarded it as a democratic Government.

When France got a Republic its chief domestic occupation at first was the wholesale slaughter of Republicans. When the

¹ Before Montesquieu's time the term "la République" was often used by French writers (La Fontaine for example) in the general sense of "the State." Thus under the Third Republic priests of Monarchical sympathies maintain that they can, without outrage to conscience, entone the *Domine salvam fac Rempublicam*, prescribed by the Government under the Concordat, at the end of Mass. See book iv. c. iv. p. 585.

leaders of all the groups had guillotined one another, a period of relative peacefulness at home ensued, and the Directory must be considered the first experiment of Republican government in France. The new rulers, not content with reviving the licentiousness of the Court of Louis XV., inaugurated in France the era of corruption under popular Government. The decadence of Republican ideas, displayed in the readiness with which Bonaparte was hailed as its master by the nation, was due not merely to the governmental anarchy, but to the corrupt regime of the Republic, which disillusioned the doctrinaires of the Revolution. Since then there have been in Europe no other republics of sufficient size and importance to afford material for inference; but on the great continents of the West, where States enjoying that democratic form of government abound, the standard of public morals is not sufficiently high to be the envy of the monarchies of the Old World.

The tradition of Republican purity is like that of the smoothness of the Mediterranean, which survives the adverse testimony of the ages. Since the Teucrians seeking the Latian shores were buffeted by Æolus at Juno's prayer, or centuries later, the apostolic shipmen were driven up and down in Adria by a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon, that dolorous sea has ever been subject to the agitations which to-day disturb the theories of travellers fleeing the storm-clouds of the north, and hoping to find the coasts of Carthage or of Italy bathed with sunlit ripples. There are days of flawless perfection on the Mediterranean just as there are men of spotless repute in Republican Governments; but days of exceeding beauty are perhaps less rare on seas without pretensions to calm, and upright statesmen are perhaps more common in monarchies which have no peculiar attribute of purity.

It would, therefore, be unfair to expect a higher standard of morals under the Third Republic than under the Second Empire, but for the reproaches uttered against that regime by Republicans. In the reign of Louis Napoleon they ascribed all the ills which befell humanity in France to the Imperial rule, and, in their optimist belief in the purifying effect of their cherished form of

government, they used to cry, "Only let us found the Republic, and then you will see the moral reform we shall effect in France."¹ The utterance of that aspiration and its failure to be realised point once more to the tendency of the French to find in formulas and theories cures for the ills inherent to human societies. After the First Empire, as we have seen, it was the British Constitution which was to reinvigorate the nation. During the Second Empire it was the Republic which was to cleanse France of corruption in high places. Towards the close of M. Carnot's Presidency a popular and mordant caricaturist² depicted the Republic as an obese demi-rep decked out in an attire unbecoming to her mature age, and, as she passes in review before a group of elderly politicians, they exclaim, "And to think how lovely she was in the days of the Empire." If such a portrait of the Republic exaggerates her defects, it is certain that her form and character little resemble the ideal honestly hoped for by some of those who, inspired by a sincere and utopian love of liberty, strove to upset the Imperial Government.

The glitter of the court of the Tuileries dazzled all Europe, and the second downfall of the Napoleonic dynasty involved France in irreparable disaster. So, as the expositors of the causes of the French defeat laid stress upon the public and private corruption of the supporters of the Imperial regime, whether politicians, functionaries, courtiers, or speculators, the idea grew that the new rulers of the land were to be the incarnation of a chastened nation. That the extravagances of the Court did not encourage a high tone of morality is undisputed. That the embellishment of the capital, to form a sumptuous setting for the fêtes which attracted thither all the pleasure-seekers of the globe, fostered a spirit of jobbery, infecting all the departments of the State, cannot be doubted. That the mal-organisation of the army which succumbed to the forces of Germany, was partly due to the dishonest incapacity of persons in authority is one of the accepted causes

¹ "Laissez-nous fonder la République et vous verrez comment nous moraliserons la France" (Eugène Pelletan).

² M. Forain.

of the rout of France. At the same time, it is certain that had Louis Napoleon been more sagacious in diplomacy, had he treated Italy with more foreseeing skill at Villafranca, and not left Austria to be crushed at Sadowa, he would not have had to take the field alone against united Germany; and with French arms victorious the world would have heard very little of the demoralisation of the Second Empire, though not one moral fault had been uncommitted of those laid to its charge. If the cannonading of Saarbruck, a bombardment *ad usum Delphini*, had with the aid of an effective ally been followed by a Magenta and a Solferino, instead of by Mars-la-Tour and Sedan, the presence of a child of fourteen on a battle-field would not have been reprobated as the final meretricious display of a corrupt system. It would have been cited as a feat not less meritorious than that of the Black Prince at Crécy; and, when the Prince Imperial had succeeded as Emperor of the French, Meissonier would have added the "Baptism of Fire" to his gallery illustrating the Napoleonic legend.

Laxity of morals, whether public or private, displayed by persons in authority is of more detrimental example in a Republican Government than in a Monarchy. Conversely, an exemplary Court has a greater effect for good in a nation than has an ill-regulated one for evil. In England a continuance of the practices of Carlton House would not have corrupted the nation, but would have terminated the Hanoverian succession. On the other hand, the pure example of the Court of Queen Victoria was an unmixed advantage to the English people, and the death of the Prince Consort, by withdrawing that influence, was probably the most important national event in the second half of the nineteenth century. But in this respect no comparison can be instituted between England and France. We take pride in the Crown of England as the symbol of the British Empire and of the supremacy of the British race. We have also a peculiar reverence for our royal house, due partly to our affection for the Sovereign, who has set a blameless example to two complete generations of her people, and partly to the fact that in a nation where there has never been, as formerly in France, a line of

demarcation between nobility and commonalty the royal family alone stands aloft as a caste apart—for which special reason marriages of its members with subjects are to be deprecated. In modern France dynasties are only temporary expedients, never accepted by a unanimous nation, so that the most upright of sovereigns could have little opportunity of making his example felt. In the case of the Second Empire, its frivolous influences were unduly extensive, because of the preponderant position of Paris in the country. Thus the perennial tendency of that city to gaiety, caused the luxurious excesses of the Tuileries to be reflected over the French people to an abnormal degree.

The converse proposition that laxity of morals in a Republican regime is more widely pernicious than under a Monarchy, requires no special qualification when applied to France. If, therefore, the malady which tainted an autocracy reappears under a republic with its purifying pretensions the last state of the country is worse than the first. After the Irish famine economists ascribed its baleful consequences to the fact that the diet of the peasantry was the simplest of food-stuffs, so that when the potato failed starvation was inevitable. Thus also if France, having reduced herself to the simplest regimen, finds that it fails to supply her with moral sustenance, it is clear that she is in a situation more unfavourable than when the Republic existed only as a resource to fall back upon.

II

Of the various parliamentary scandals with which the career of the Republic has been chequered, the most typical was the Panama affair; and the tenacity with which the French public perpetuates the sordid legend is a symptom of its demoralising belief in the venality of legislators. The thrift of France had subscribed fifty millions sterling for the piercing of the Isthmus of Panama undertaken by M. de Lesseps, the maker of the Suez Canal. In 1892 it was known that most of that money having disappeared, he and others were to be tried on the charge of

misappropriating it. Considering the colossal sum lost by the French public in this enterprise, little interest was taken in the coming trials. At last one day it was suddenly stirred by the dramatic suicide of a well-known financier, closely connected with the Panama Company and with leading politicians,—driven to death, it was said, by menaces and demands of blackmail. Then succeeded a period, the like of which has never been witnessed in a great capital save at a time of revolution. In the Chambers wholesale denunciations of ministers, senators, and deputies took the place of debate. A parliamentary committee was charged to sift accusations brought against members of selling their votes which had passed the law authorising the Panama Company to solicit money from the public. The inconclusive proceedings excited rather than allayed the popular thirst for scandal. The people of Paris seemed to breathe an atmosphere of corruption and of delation. Morning and evening the journals announced each day the arrest of some prominent politician, or the details of a midnight domiciliary search, and the sinister query of the Reign of Terror was often on men's lips, "*à quand une nouvelle charrette ?*"

Emotion reached its height, and the sense of national shame its depth, when the Prime Minister of France ordered the prosecution of two of his own chosen colleagues in the Cabinet for corrupt traffic of their office. He demanded of the Chamber that parliamentary immunity should be withdrawn from men who sat by him at the council board. These two ministers were eventually discharged by the magistrates after a secret inquiry, and it would seem that the prosecutions were set on foot with undue recklessness. The error was even more significant than would have been the conviction of the ministers. Had proofs of their guilt been made public it would have been said that the Cabinet to save its own good name was forced to pursue its unworthy members. But that the first minister of the Republic should have been moved to compromise gratuitously his Ministry and his party by announcing to the civilised world, without overwhelming proof, that the colleagues he had chosen to govern France were suspected criminals, revealed his belief

that the political society in which he lived was sapped with corruption.

M. de Lesseps, tried without a jury, received a sentence of imprisonment, afterwards quashed on a technical point. His son, arraigned at the assizes with a band of politicians for giving and receiving bribes in connection with the passing of the Panama Bills, was, with one or two persons of no importance, found guilty and sent to gaol. A hundred deputies and senators were said to be implicated in the matter. Eleven only were prosecuted by the Government, of whom six had been Cabinet ministers, one having been Premier, and two others holders of the Seals of Justice. Only four of these members of Parliament appeared before a jury, the prosecutions during the secret preliminary inquiry being abandoned against the best known of the accused. Of the four who stood a public trial, M. Baihaut, an insignificant ex-minister, confessed, unluckily for himself, and received a severe sentence. The jury acquitted the others, interpreting the general sentiment that the real criminals would be further screened if these minor offenders were punished. Public opinion was thus left in a state of unsatisfied suspicion. The proceedings in the courts and in Parliament had stirred up the mud of the political morasses without cleansing the land of those malarial deposits. Nothing was clear but that millions had disappeared, and that the persons punished could account for only a trifling sum. It was, indeed, inconceivable that the entire nation should have been thrown into agitation, and that ministers should have been moved to arraign their own colleagues, if the real cause of the emotion were the paltry speculation of one minor politician.

It is a delicate matter for a stranger to sit in judgment on charges brought by Frenchmen against Frenchmen. As however no study of parliamentary institutions under the Republic would be complete without some account of the unhappy scandals which periodically affect the Legislature, one may avoid the invidious task by noting their moral effect on the nation, together with the opinions of French people on the subject. In this way light

may be thrown on the theory that representative institutions reflect the character of a people. It is certain that the French, as a nation, are remarkable for their integrity, which, combined with self-denying industry, is of a high order; yet no Frenchman would, without serious qualification, predicate the same of the whole body of legislators. I therefore propose to deal with this question by citing the statements of persons implicated in the Panama affair, and the comments upon it of some of those who worthily represent the average sentiment of the French nation.

The sentence passed on the aged M. de Lesseps produced widespread indignation in France, although his sanguine recklessness in projecting a repetition of his Egyptian triumph had ruined thousands of French homes. The peculiar nature of his previous popularity quickened that feeling. It had been won on the eve of the national disasters by a durable achievement, which had caused its author to be acclaimed abroad, when he crossed the mutilated frontier, as the upholder of the genius of France, further discredited since the War by politicians for whose sordid sins he was now the scapegoat. Elected to the Academy, he was not asked for the wonted literary credentials. As Renan said to him at his reception,¹ "After Lamartine, you have, I think, been the man the most beloved of our century,"—ominous words in the lips of a master of irony; for the lyrical promoter of the downfall of the Orleans dynasty had to compare himself before he died to the vanquished of Pharsalia, to Belisarius, and to other neglected heroes fallen from a high estate.

M. Baihaut, who pleaded guilty to having taken a bribe of £12,000 when Minister of Public Works, was one of those statesmen, produced in abundance under the Republic, whose names convey no idea to their countrymen. He was, however, in intellectual training the superior of many of his political peers, having been educated as an engineer at the *École Polytechnique*. It was in a Cabinet presided over by another pupil of that school, M. de Freycinet, that he held a portfolio. His confession threw an instructive light on the psychological attitude towards their public

¹ April 23, 1885.

duties of politicians of a certain type. "In proposing the bill legalising the Lottery Loan," he said, "I considered that I was performing a useful and laudable action which might have saved the Panama Company. Having brought in the bill I was assailed by the temptation to consider myself merely as an engineer, and as having in that capacity aided a company in economising its funds, thus acquiring the consequent right to a share in the profits."¹

This member of a respectable profession who had left it for the more lucrative trade of politics, hastening to secure in it a comfortable competence, conscious of the brief duration of Ministries and of the uncertainty of return to office, is, it is to be feared, not a solitary example of the results of the parliamentary system.² He was the only politician punished for the traffic of his vote. Consequently sympathy for him might have been greater but for the fact that four years before, amid the applause of his party, he had obtained the condemnation for libel of one who had anticipated his own confession. In his election address of the same year, referring to the clearing of his character, he declared that: "It behoved devoted Republicans to repress the license of a press which does not shrink from calumniating and sullyng even the best of citizens." So proud was the ex-minister of this sentiment, that he had it appended to his biography in the official handbook of the Chamber of 1889, from which he was expelled.

Dr. Cornelius Herz was a witness whose unsupported evidence

¹ Procès de Corruption, Cour d'Assises de la Seine, Mars 1893.

² cf. the case of M. Gaillard, member for Orange, who, acquitted in December 1897 on a charge of selling his vote to the Panama promoters, thus addressed the Court: "Before I was elected deputy I was for twenty-two years at the Paris bar. I, alas! took to politics, and ruined an honourable career. In Parliament I lost my implements of honest toil and my professional independence. Before entering the Chamber I was happy. I made a fair income and looked forward to the competence which awaits all who stick conscientiously to their work. The sinister prestige of a Member of Parliament dazzled me. I had to mortgage my family property, then to sell it. I have nothing left in the world. I am a vagabond and a beggar."—Cour d'Assises de la Seine, 21 Déc. 1897. The comments on this sad case suggested that in France an honest citizen who turns politician is looked upon almost as regretfully as a decent man in England who takes to gambling or to drink.

might be regarded with suspicion, but he only echoed general opinion in France when he said, "Baihaut's real crime was his confession ; for there is many a colleague of his in the Chamber who ought to be his colleague in Étampes gaol." The events which terminated the French career of Dr. Herz may have biassed his judgment against the politicians of the Republic ; but no one in Europe had more intimate knowledge of their lives and methods. The cosmopolitan financiers who, from lands beyond the Rhine, have crossed the Vosges and the Jura to regulate the riches of France, have not perhaps all the influence ascribed to them by anti-Semitic zealots. Yet Dr. Herz, who was as curious a figure as any portrayed by Balzac, was undoubtedly a potent manipulator of the finances and politics of the Republic. For the part he played in the Panama affair he incurred a sentence of imprisonment passed in his absence ; but his acts thus required were committed at a time when Republican ministers and politicians vied with one another to do him honour. The offspring of Bavarian Jews, he esteemed so lightly the accident of his birth in a French frontier department that he became a citizen of the United States. The official register of the National Order records that it was as an American savant that he received from the Republic an exalted rank in the Legion of Honour,—so high that it was never attained by Charcot, whose scientific attainments were of more popular celebrity. But "science" is not an exact term, and the peculiar knowledge possessed by Dr. Herz, which ministers splendidly recognised, perhaps deserved to be thus denominated.

Of the money abstracted from the Panama funds for illegitimate purposes, apart from the amounts said to have been spent in direct bribery, enormous subsidies were made to persons who claimed that they could be useful to the Company in Parliament and in the press. The magnitude of the sums paid by commercial enterprises in France to organs of publicity is an important feature of journalism in a country where the lucrative commodity of advertisement takes a less well-defined form than is usual in English newspapers. If a journal which demands an exorbitant

payment for its recommendation of a speculative undertaking be owned by a senator or a deputy, the subsidy cannot perhaps be described as the purchase of a member of Parliament, though it may affect a vote when the project is submitted to the Chambers. But this subsidising of the press has produced an abuse more dangerous and subtle than that of the direct bribery of individual legislators. M. Floquet's connection with the Panama affair cost him the Presidency of the Chamber, though he was not deemed to have made personal profit out of it. Nevertheless, he avowed that when Prime Minister he had laid hands upon £12,000 of the funds subscribed by his humble countrymen for the piercing of the Isthmus, and had utilised it in combating the enemies of the Government on questions unconnected with the Panama Canal. He, moreover, justified his action. He would not deign, he said, to plead that he had an exceptional crisis to cope with—the Boulangist movement being at its height in 1888. He took his stand on the general principle that under normal circumstances it was the right and the duty of a Ministry to supervise the distribution of such subsidies so as to prevent them from being used to the prejudice of the Government.¹

No theory more perilous was ever enunciated in a representative Assembly. It is a monstrous doctrine that the chief of a Ministry should sanction and legalise the misappropriation of private property by demanding a share of it for the purposes of the State. Requests for money, moreover, addressed by ministers to a company dependent on ministerial favour have the effect of commands:—*stipendia orant; preces erant sed quibus contradicere non posset*.² It was not to supply electioneering funds that the peasant or the shopkeeper offered his frugal savings to the promoters of the Canal; and the plea that the Ministry of the moment had the right to make such a levy was a sophistry worthy of an unscrupulous despotism. The pretence was that the investors were members of the electorate which had entrusted the Government with the general interests of the nation. But

¹ Chambre des Députés : Séance du 23 Décembre 1892.

² Tacitus, *Hist.* iv. 46.

even if French Ministries lasted for years, and were supported by vast majorities in the country, the principle laid down would be indefensible. At this particular crisis if a national plebiscite had been taken the opponents of the Ministry would have had a great majority. Moreover, as most of the thrifty in France take no interest in politics, the actual supporters of the Government must have been very few among the investors on whose money M. Floquet demanded tribute "in the superior interest of the Republic."

If M. Floquet's Ministry, which lasted for ten months, and M. Rouvier's for half a year, could plead that "the superior interest of the Republic" justified their levy of subsidies from a commercial enterprise to keep them in possession of ministerial advantages, it is easy to see whither this doctrine would lead. Private members of Parliament who owned journals would argue that the interest of the State required similar grants for their prints which might by a change of Ministry become Government organs. Other legislators would plausibly reason that the accident of not having capital invested in the press did not exclude them from the sphere of "the superior interest of the Republic." They could urge that it was as legitimate for them so to seek the means of paying for their households and their pleasures, as for their journalistic colleagues so to satisfy their printers and their paper-merchants. If the Panama affair had been an isolated incident in the history of the Republic it would not have been necessary to dwell upon this point; but it is to be feared that this principle has been followed by ministers both before and since the adventure of M. Floquet, who paid a severe penalty for his adoption of it.

From the mental process which warrants a politician in taking irregular subsidies to maintain him in his political situation to that which condones the application of such funds to his private needs the transition is perilously easy. Every one who has lived in France has had pointed out to him the sumptuous dwelling of this or that ex-minister, who, it is said, has had no other calling or possible source of profit than politics, since the

days when he perforce inhabited a very modest abode. Idle tales of this kind are not easy to verify. They might be disregarded, as well as similar stories often told with minute detail in the journals, but that their currency displays the demoralising belief that there are politicians who make fortunes out of their public functions. One of the ministers involved in the Panama affair threw some light on the conception formed by politicians of a certain type concerning their rights in this respect. When the Ribot Ministry announced to the Chamber that two of its members were to be prosecuted, one of them, in the course of a bold defence before a hostile House, said, "I have the consciousness of having had the affairs of this country in my hands without my fortune having abnormally increased."¹ The only possible interpretation of those measured words, uttered by a practised speaker at the great crisis of his life, is that he held that there is a normal point up to which a minister's private fortune may legitimately increase during his tenure of office.

The salary paid to a French minister is only £2400 a year. In Paris, where living is dear, it is impossible for a household inhabiting one of the palaces provided for ministers to save money out of that stipend. The "normal" augmentation, therefore, of his resources which, according to M. Rouvier, is permissible to a minister of the Republic during his term of office cannot come out of his salary; and if he resign his portfolio a richer man than when he accepted it, he must have utilised his public position for his private pecuniary advantage. This need not mean either that he appropriated the money of the nation or that he accepted bribes. He may merely have turned to his own profit information acquired in the public service; but that method of gaining riches, if it be accepted as legitimate, is of even greater danger to the commonwealth than proceedings which, when detected, can be penalised as crimes. The ex-minister in question did not speak for all contemporary office-bearers, many of whom reject with indignation his theory. At the same time, so current is the belief that members of Parliament, whether in or out of office,

¹ *Chambre des Députés : Séance du 20 Décembre 1892.*

look upon politics as a lucrative profession, that soon after the Panama affair an attempt was made to check the evil by legislation. A Radical deputy¹ brought in a bill providing that each parliamentary candidate on the eve of the poll should submit to investigation the total value of his property; and, if elected, he should, at the expiry of his mandate, consent to a similar inquest to show that his means had not augmented during his legislative career. The project was hardly practical, but its proposal was significant.

III

We will now pass to the comments on the general question of political corruption made by spectators who represent intelligent French opinion, carefully avoiding the testimony of extreme partisans whether Reactionary or Socialist.

No defenders of the Republic have denied the existence of corruption in its Legislature or the impunity of the offenders. It is not necessary to quote more than one of them, the most respectable champion of the Constitution and of the parliamentary system, the *Journal des Débats*. When the Chamber invalidated the election of M. Wilson, the son-in-law of President Grévy, who had reappeared on the political scene, a Radical-Socialist deputy protested that the unpunished "Panamists" were trying to make their own offences forgotten by virtuously excluding a former ally, whose delinquencies were of a remoter date than theirs. The comment of the organ of the Moderate Republicans was significant. No doubt, said the *Débats*, there are a number of "Panamist" deputies in the present Chamber as corrupt as M. Wilson, but it is unjust of you Radicals to suggest that they are only to be found in the ranks of the Moderates: "If we have to revive this sad history of Panama we can prove that among the men most deeply compromised were some of the most illustrious members of the Radical party."²

¹ M. Beauquier: deputy for Besançon. ² *Journal des Débats*, 27 Fév. 1894.

The study of the drama is essential to an acquaintance with the political as well as the social phases of the French nation. The masterpieces of Augier, for example, portraying the members of the bourgeoisie which, having made the Revolution, considered that its work was done because they had grown rich thereby, are as instructive for the period of Louis Philippe as the memoirs of Barante or the treatises of Tocqueville.¹ In France, moreover, the drama bears a more important relation to the life of the people than in England, where the revived art of the playwright is in its infancy. In Paris the public of the theatres represents every class of the population. The leading critics, whose weekly articles are waited for with an interest unknown in other countries, have to possess not only literary erudition and artistic instinct, but also a profound knowledge of the springs of every popular sentiment, political, moral, or social. Thus a comedy of modern life, studied together with the attitude of its audience and the comments of its critics, will sometimes give a juster insight into a subject of actual interest than all the polemics ever written upon it.

M. Sarcey, the veteran of dramatic criticism, is so celebrated for his theatrical chronicle in the *Temps* that it is sometimes forgotten that he was an uncompromising Republican polemist who fought by the side of Gambetta for the establishment of the Republic. The year after the Panama trials, a highly laudatory article of his roused public curiosity in a play entitled *L'Engrenage*, by a young writer, M. Brioux. M. Sarcey, after a minute analysis of the piece, advised his disciples to read as well as to see this "most happy essay in political comedy."²

The story is that of a self-made provincial manufacturer, persuaded by his wife, who wishes to live in Paris, and by a senator who wishes to utilise him, to come forward as candidate for the

¹ "Avec Émile Augier, Alexandre Dumas restera le témoin et le juge incorruptible de quarante années de notre histoire sociale" (A. Mézières, de l'Académie Française). This was also the opinion of M. Taine, who made the men and women of the comedies of Augier and of Dumas fils the subject of two philosophical essays on contemporary French types. — *Vie et Opinions de M. Granddorge*, xvii., xviii.

² Feuilleton du *Temps*, 21 Mai 1894.

Chamber. Reluctantly consenting, he commences the electoral campaign with high-minded ideas of the duties of a deputy, refusing to lend himself to the practices usual in a contest, until his agents tell him that the local politicians do not want a professor of morals, but a delegate to perform their jobs. He makes his mark in the Chamber, but his business in the country suffers from his absence. He is realising that a brilliant politician cannot support a family in Paris on a pound a day, when his friend the senator introduces a company promoter, who has in hand a scheme for piercing the Simplon, which only needs the authority of Parliament for the raising of a few millions sterling to complete a new line of communication between France and Italy, to aid in effecting which is an act of purest patriotism. The plausible promoter, at the close of an interview with the deputy, leaves on his table, as if by accident, a cheque for a thousand pounds. At first the money is indignantly returned, but finally it is accepted by the wife, to whom the financier protests that it is merely a trifling offering for her works of charity. The play follows the story of the Panama scandal up to the moment when the denunciations begin, and the bribed legislators are menaced with exposure. At this point it departs from its historical model in making the deputy refund his bribe, with a public confession and resignation of his seat, amid the unanimous execration of his political friends.

This comedy formed the theme of an interesting essay by M. Jules Lemaître on the moral standard of the political world. M. Lemaître, who has since become an Academician, his election being greatly due to his masterly dramatic criticisms, is the most philosophic critic of the day. He described the play as the "adventures of an honest man who turned politician and finally became an honest man again." He proceeded: "The work is excellent. It brings to mind clearly and vigorously things that we know, but that we never know well enough. It is too true that in a democracy, perhaps more than in other regimes, politics becomes the mistress of falsehood, of hypocrisy, and of cowardice. It is too true that, in the society in which we live, a bandit like

this calm, cynical old senator is as certainly a scoundrel as that he is 'a man of average morality.' Amid the life that we lead, with no other objects than money, vanity, and pleasure, there are among our public men charming fellows, and even 'men of integrity,' who have been guilty of scurvy transactions, the turpitude of which they have only realised the day they were threatened in the name of abstract morality, which probably their denouncers have practised very indifferently."¹

M. Lemaitre, it will be observed, joins issue with Montesquieu on an important point. We shall have to return to his appreciations, which are, like much of his writing, too pessimistic, though they are of value as being those of one who reflects as well as guides the opinion of the most cultivated classes in France. More important, perhaps, than his analysis, or the less subjective eulogy of M. Sarcey, was the unanimously cordial reception of the piece by the Parisian public, quick to resent in the theatre political allusions displeasing to any section of it. M. Sardou had to withdraw *Thermidor* from the Théâtre Français, because there were apologists to resent reflections made on Robespierre and the butchers of 1794; but there were none to protest against this indictment of the parliamentary morals of the living representatives of the people.²

This recognition by the French public of the existence of

¹ Feuilleton du *Journal des Débats*, 20 Mai 1894.

² *L'Engrenage* is a mechanical term signifying the relative disposition of cog-wheels to one another, and suggests the idea of being caught in moving machinery. There was a curious incident connected with the licensing of this play. The censor had previously refused to license one of M. Maurice Barrès on the same subject of parliamentary corruption, entitled *Une Journée Parlementaire*, though when it was afterwards produced privately at the Théâtre Libre the *Débats* described it as "a singularly sober sketch." Consequently *L'Engrenage* was refused by many managers for fear of the censor, who, however, when it was brought to him took the unusual step of asking the minister to read it. It happened that the department of Fine Arts was then presided over by a minister of high character, M. Spuller, and he, thinking that the moral of the play might be useful for some of his former allies, who had brought discredit on the Opportunist party, licensed its public representation; so this merciless attack on the parliamentary system was given to the world with the special imprimatur of Gambetta's chosen friend. It was produced in the summer, when fashionable Reactionaries, who sneer at institutions of the Republic, eschew theatres; and it was a curious spectacle to see the house thronged with people of the middle and humble classes, approving with their applause the sombre picture.

parliamentary corruption leads to the gravest phase of the whole question :—the indifference of an honest people to the political dishonesty of its representatives chosen by universal suffrage. M. François Coppée, though a poet, is a keen observer of the sublunary ways of his countrymen. He, after the Panama trials, predicted that at the general election, a few months later, "The candidates released on an '*ordonnance de non-lieu*,'¹ or acquitted by a jury of the Seine, will obtain the most imposing majorities ; and to have met with such an accident will, in election addresses, be described as 'having been calumniated, and having suffered for the Republic.'" The prophecy was fulfilled, even without the implicated politicians being called upon to pose as martyrs or to apologise. The Reactionaries, who in the Chamber had displayed fatuous feebleness when the public was freshly zealous for a cleansing, were not likely to be formidable in the constituencies, with the nation weary of the scandal ; but their unchanging ineptitude would not, without the imperturbable apathy of the French electors, have sufficed to secure impunity for those of whom M. Coppée wrote. In some rural districts the frugal peasants, convinced that no sane man would take the manifest trouble of seeking a seat in the Chamber except for motives of personal profit, had no sympathy with their less prudent neighbours in their indignation at the malversation of their expected gains by their parliamentary representatives.

Thus, owing to the indifference of the electors to the conduct of their representatives, a French deputy lacks a potent motive for keeping on the path of integrity. This is not due solely to the natural disinclination of the French population to occupy itself

¹ An "*ordonnance de non-lieu*" to some extent corresponds to a decision of a police magistrate, in our country, that there is not enough evidence against an accused person to go to a jury, with the important difference that the proceedings which result in the "*non-lieu*," or in the committal to the assizes, are secret. Hence the dissatisfied suspicion aroused when most of the politicians arrested on the charge of corruption in the Panama affair were released, without the public having any information as to the influences or motives which had induced the magistrates to take that course ; for the French judges, though incorruptible in the ordinary sense of the word, are necessarily amenable to political influences, as they are ill-paid functionaries dependent on the good-will of politicians for their promotion.

with politics and with matters generally which do not directly concern it. There is wanting in France the force which is most effective to make an industrious people take interest in current affairs outside the domestic horizon of thrift and toil. From time to time a revolutionary or patriotic wind passes over the land, inspiring the peaceful inhabitants with ideas which take them beyond their local surroundings; but even in such crises the minority alone is so swept along. To educate, therefore, the French electorate at normal periods, an organisation of party government would be necessary. I do not venture to say that such education would benefit any section of the population; but without the party system, with its direction of the choice of candidates and its vigilance over the public conduct of political opponents, there is no prospect of the ordinary French elector ever waking out of his apathy with regard to matters which do not affect his private interests.

IV

The party system is probably the strongest purifying agent in parliamentary government under extended suffrage. Before further examining this proposition it will be necessary to make some preliminary observations. It would serve no useful purpose to make a comparison between the standard of political morality in France to-day and under past regimes. Some indiscreet defenders of the Republic have declared that if the Wilson scandal and the Panama affair were discreditable, political morality was as low in France under Louis Philippe and Louis Napoleon. The suggestion that under all governments, constitutional monarchy, democratic dictatorship, and parliamentary republic, corruption is the characteristic of French political life, is unpatriotic. It is true that the downfall of the middle-class Monarchy was hastened by the condemnation of two ex-ministers¹

¹ "Quelques faits éclatants de corruption découverts par hasard avaient persuadé à la nation que toute la classe qui gouvernait était corrompue" (Tocqueville). In 1847 M. Teste, Minister of Public Works in the Guizot Ministry of 1840, and General Cubières, Minister of War in M. Thiers' Ministry of the same year, were convicted for having taken bribes in connection with a mining concession.

who had acted on the famous recommendation of M. Guizot, "make yourselves rich," in a sense not contemplated by that pattern of personal integrity; but the governing class at that epoch was the elect of limited suffrage, and the extent of the evil was small. To it the corruption which existed under the Second Empire bore as little resemblance as to that which has developed since the War. That fortunes were made by persons attached to the Government of Louis Napoleon in connection with the improvements of Paris, and that jobbery was connived at by the authorities, is probable enough. But parliamentary corruption can only exist under a parliamentary regime; and though certain ministers were believed to traffic their influence, members of the Corps Législatif were shielded from the temptation of selling their votes by the paternal arm of their Imperial master.

The most common form of political corruption in England during the nineteenth century has been the bribery of electors by candidates for Parliament. As that offence has been almost stamped out in our country by severe legislation, and as the mild phase of it existing in France has been treated of elsewhere, there is no need to deal with it here. It is, however, interesting to inquire why the parliamentary system in England has escaped evils which now ravage political society in France under circumstances somewhat similar.

A striking result of the later progress of civilisation is the assimilation in certain respects of the moral standard of nations hitherto distinct by tradition, race, or geographical position. It is not the march of democracy but the march of civilisation which levels international distinctions. The most manifest effect of the development of rapid means of transit and communication is that they are making paramount the rule of plutocracy in the most civilised communities. Under that sway the tone and moral standard of societies are assimilated according to the civilisation which they enjoy rather than according to their race-origin or their political institutions. This is most evident in great cities. The Spanish and the French are both of Latin race, and enjoy similar electoral franchise. Yet Paris has fewer ethical points of

resemblance with Madrid than with London or with New York. The reason is that the capital of Spain stands outside the modern movement ; while the other three cities are centres of the new civilisation, in instant communication with one another at every moment of the living day. The closeness of that connection is due to the artificial markets of the world, which have been so developed by electric inventions that the stock-exchange has become more powerful to influence the spirit of modern peoples than any religion however catholic, than any philosophy however humanitarian.

Voltaire imbued the Court of Potsdam with his tenets. Montesquieu ripened his doctrines in visiting England, and thereby changed the history of France, as well as supplying material for the Constitution of the United States. Adam Smith's theories travelled abroad and begat a school of French economists. But those great international teachers filled the minds of men inhabiting diverse countries with new ideas on ethical, governmental, and commercial questions without producing a new cosmopolitan sect such as our later civilisation has given birth to. To-day the monopolists or railway kings at New York and Chicago, or the financiers, Jew and Gentile, of London and Paris, have more influence in shaping the ethics of the world than all the philosophers had in the eighteenth century. With the aid of the telegraph, which puts two hemispheres in as close communication as two adjacent streets, the financial operators of the globe form a fraternity powerful to set up and maintain its moral code in cities and in lands remote from one another. Our generation is not the first to have seen populations demoralised by the desire of riches ; but the crises thus caused in the past were isolated and localised. The history of Law, the Scottish venturer, who manipulated the finances of France when the South Sea Bubble was taking place in England, indicates that before the United States existed, and before the Jews were emancipated, there were cosmopolitan financiers of the type familiar to-day ; but it also shows that men of boundless imagination and energy then had their influence circumscribed. Nearly

a century later the tidings of the battle of Waterloo, on which the prosperity of Europe depended, was not known in England, almost within earshot of its cannonading, forty-eight hours after its decision; and though the first news of it came to a banking-house, it caused less money to change hands in speculation than takes place in Paris on the morrow of a skirmish in South Africa, the result of which cannot have any direct and legitimate effect on the resources and politics of France.

When, therefore, in spite of this assimilating process, a different ethical code seems to regulate political life in the two nations at the head of European civilisation, it is clear that the community which escapes the evils into which the other falls must be possessed of special safeguards. We must dismiss the idea that the standard of probity, handed down from less civilised times, is higher in one of those nations than in the other. The French are a people remarkable for their honesty; and we may take it that in the two countries the honest in matters relating to money and property form the vast majority of the population. But in England as well as in France are to be found in various walks of life men, such as M. Lemaître describes, of average integrity, who are capable of committing, or who have committed acts of turpitude, which they decline to recognise as infringing the laws of abstract morality until one day, by omitting some technical precaution, they find themselves charged with an indictable offence. Here is a trustee who, by bought connivance, diverts to his own profit the money of women or children left to his care. Here is an offender who, by adroit menaces, compasses the suicide of an embarrassing accomplice. All who have practised the law know of the masked existence of such persons in local positions of credit, and sometimes they enter even the House of Commons. In late years two members of the British Parliament have been convicted for offences against property: one of them of the type unhappily growing in influence in all prosperous countries—the speculator who, at his best, seeks to enrich himself without increasing the wealth of the community; the other a country gentleman of

the class which has produced the most respectable of English statesmen.

Thus we must recognise that in our country, as in France, honourable positions, which ought to be held only by men of probity, are sometimes filled by the dishonest and the predatory. But if such ill-disposed persons occasionally find their way into the House of Commons, how is it that their detected misdeeds never take the form of offences connected with their legislative mandate? It cannot be from any scruple on their part. A man who would plunder women or ruin scores of homes would not shrink from trafficking his vote from a sentimental respect for the high tradition of the House of Commons. The great motive power to keep wavering members on the path of parliamentary integrity is the party system, and this is wanting in France. The annals of political corruption under the Republic clearly show that the legislators who sell their votes and commit like offences are not as a rule men who in the ordinary relations of life would misappropriate or defraud. They are usually M. Lemaître's "men of average morality," who in a great capital fall under the influence of that cosmopolitan code which, as we have seen, follows civilisation. They are of the ethical type of those who in commercial countries accept the secret commissions in trade, decried by English judges, or of those members of our Legislature who, for a consideration, lend their names to the directorates of unsound companies. It should however be said that this particular temptation to misuse his parliamentary position less often assails a French legislator,—the title of Member of Parliament not having in France an expansive effect on the credulity of investors. Such men, seeing that their colleagues sometimes augment their resources by methods which, dubious outwardly, infringe no abstract principle of morality, imitate them till insensibly they arrive at the mental condition described in the confession of the Minister who alone was punished in the Panama affair.

There is no restraining power in the French parliamentary system to arrest a member on his easy descent, and he knows

that if he escape penal condemnation he will enjoy relative impunity. Many deputies are men of high integrity; but virtue in a large Assembly is of small force without organisation. Moreover a group of legislators leagued together merely as a vigilance committee would have neither consistency nor durability, which the discipline of party can alone effect. Corruption of the kind which has undermined the Republic could not coexist with party government. A party whose ministers or supporters had incurred as much suspicion as fell on the politicians acquitted in the Panama affair would under it be swept out of existence for a period. When the first denunciations appeared, the leaders of the party to avert that fate would have said to their implicated colleagues: "In spite of your abilities and of the manifest exaggeration of these charges we must part company; for though you may have been culpable only of indiscretion, we cannot afford to be identified with doubtful transactions." The Opposition, eager not to lose its vantage, would scan with equal keenness the acts of its own members. With party government the electorate would not have appeared to condone the Panama scandals. As it was, when a deputy involved in them went before his constituents, whose local interests he had well served, he never found a more formidable opponent than the nominee of some decayed or immature group. Consequently the electors gave their votes to the old member whose influence with the prefecture in the past had benefited the district, rather than to the newcomer whose denunciations had no authority; whereas had each electoral district been the scene of a contest between organised parties, the same spectacle would not have been presented.

While it may be presumed that the scandals which recur in the parliamentary government of France would be restrained if party organisation could be applied to it, there is no more prospect of the introduction of the party system than there is of the resurrection of the Merovingian kings. It is, however, useful to note the evils which may result from its absence as a warning to all parliaments to avoid breaking up into groups. These outbreaks or exposures of political corruption, therefore

are not a sign that the French nation has become demoralised. They rather indicate that it is endowed with a system of government unsuitable to its temperament, which seems to make it the accomplice of the misdeeds of its representatives, over whom, owing to the defects of the system, it has little real control. Thus corruption under the Republic constitutes another condemnation of the parliamentary system in France. That the parliamentary government under which such scandals have increased is Republican in form has not much to do with their cause. No doubt the incidents which have marked the history of the Republic since it has been governed by Republicans have most effectively gibbeted the pretension, that the name of Republic inspires with virtue the citizens under the regime bearing that name. It is not, however, the absence of a monarch but the presence of the parliamentary system which troubles France. The advantage imputed to the Monarchical form of government over the Republican in this respect is that a sovereign, being the tangible head of the State, is held responsible for abuses which flourish under his rule, and his crown being at stake if they continue, he might use his personal influence to check them. This, however, could not apply to a revived or improvised constitutional Monarchy in France. Such a regime would naturally rest on the parliamentary system which would not cast off its defects because it was presided over by a nominally irremovable sovereign. On the other hand, it is possible to conceive a form of government labelled Republican which might repress the evils. The Consulate, for example, was a Republic unburdened with parliamentary institutions, and brought into existence, on the eve of the century now ending, by the corruptions of another Republican system.

Two other causes, sometimes cited as conducing to political corruption under the Republic, need not occupy our attention—democratic franchise and payment of members. The Monarchy of July, under which members were elected by limited suffrage and were unpaid, was, as we have seen, hastened to its end by parliamentary scandals which gave currency to the belief that the

Legislature so constituted was a corrupt body. In the ensuing half century of universal suffrage the popular vote has been inconsistent in its decisions ; but parliamentary corruption seems to have been only an accidental result of its exercise during one period of its erratic history. The converse result expected by some of its doctrinaire admirers has, however, not been realised. It cannot be said that the democratic electorate has had a purifying influence on its representatives.

As to the payment of members, the opponents of the practice say that it encourages corruption in two ways. It induces parliamentary representatives to regard a political career as a source of profit, and it introduces into Parliament needy men whose poverty makes them easy victims to bribery. The former is the more valid objection. It, however, applies more strongly to the payment of ministers, for they are remunerated much more highly than ordinary members. Moreover, if their appetites are thus whetted for making profit out of politics, their opportunities are infinitely greater than are those of mere senators and deputies. The latter objection is the more plausible ; but when any scandal has occurred under the Third Republic in which legislators have been accused of corrupt dealings, it has not been clearly shown that those most implicated were men who had no other source of income than their salary of a pound a day. On the contrary, the deputy whose name has been most conspicuously associated with corruption in the French Legislature was a very rich man from his youth ; while, in the subsequent Panama affair the most suspicious cases were those of senators and deputies to whom a daily stipend of twenty-five francs was not of supreme importance. It is possible that there have been indigent legislators living penuriously on their allowance, who have been tempted to add to it by corrupt means ; but such cases, when they occur, may be ascribed rather to the unhealthy tone pervading political circles than to the system which seems to encourage the presence in Parliament of men without resources. If the payment of members aggravates in any wise the evil it cannot be regarded as one of its primary causes. Members

are paid in countries where venality is not imputed to politicians, and in France the practice has become part of the legislative system, accepted alike under authoritative and parliamentary regimes. It is approved of by representatives of all opinions, and the most disinterested inquirers into the origin of political corruption under the Republic have laid no stress on it.

V

There is another phase of the ethical results of the present regime in France which is often the subject of discussion. The Republicans, who used to compare Napoleon III. with Tiberius, declared that not only had his rule reproduced the political corruption of the Roman Empire, but that under it private morals had sunk to so low a level that only the elevating influence of a Republic could raise them again. The idea was sincerely cherished by some of the irreconcilables of the heroic age of Republicanism, who thought that France, chastened by the tribulations of war, would find in the Republican form of government a refuge from the luxurious excesses of the Second Empire. As M. Jules Ferry said, after its tragic fall, "France, delivered from the corruptions of the Empire, has entered into the period of the austere virtues."

Though they sometimes accompany one another there is no necessary association between public corruption and a low standard of morals in private life, any more than there is between virtue, domestic or political, and the Republican form of government. As to the former proposition, M. Grévy is the most conspicuous Republican example in France of one who regarded the tenure of office as a source of personal profit. He was such a model of domestic propriety, that it was his too blind affection for his family, combined with a too zealous practice of the virtue of unluxurious thrift, which led him into public wrong-doing. That private austerity is fostered under a Republic is a theory based on no historical experience since the abnormal period of Puritan rigour under the English Commonwealth. The sole previous

experiment of Republican government in France, which lasted long enough to produce a school of morals, was the Directory, under which every iniquity, public and private, was encouraged, the incarnation of the regime being Barras, whose venality was eclipsed by his profligacy.¹

The stern Republicans, who chafed at the decadence of private morality under the Second Empire, had not in their predictions the support of even the legends of pseudo-classicism; for in the revolutionary text-book of antiquity, the biographer of the young Anacharsis had pointed out that "Périclès autorisa la licence, Aspasia l'étendit et Alcibiade la rendit aimable."² It is right to say that the Third Republic has been as innocent of Aspasias as it has been destitute of the statesmanship of Pericles, or the brilliancy of Alcibiades. Neither has it reproduced modern types like Barras, which flourished under the First Republic, and were the direct offspring of the great Revolution. Hence it may be inferred that the mixture of the true revolutionary stock with imperial and constitutional strains has not been a disadvantage. There would have been no cause for expecting the standard of human conduct to be transformed by the Republic, had not the opponents of the Second Empire, seeing that it licensed abuses public and private, ascribed them to the form of government instead of to a combination of circumstances, national and international as well as dynastic, which preluded the war of 1870.

It must be allowed that in spite of history the fiction is widespread beyond France and beyond the ranks of the austere denouncers of the Second Empire. Consequently strangers who come from Monarchical countries are unfavourably impressed with certain spectacles which meet their eye under the Republic, though they would pass unnoticed under any other regime. For

¹ The following is the testimony of one of his co-directors, La Révellière :— "Au Luxembourg Barras n'était entouré que des chefs de l'anarchie la plus crapuleuse, d'aristocrates les plus corrompus, de femmes perdues, d'hommes ruinés, d'agioteurs, de maîtresses et de mignons. La débauche la plus échevelée se pratiquait de son aveu dans sa maison."—*Mémoires de La Révellière Lépoux*.

² *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*, vol. i. éd. de 1788.

example, the frequentation of the *foyer-de-danse* at the Opera does not in Paris imply a tendency to irregularity of life, such as habitual visits behind the scenes of theatres in other capitals might suggest. That spacious green-room is the resort of all classes of Parisians, serious as well as gay, of men of letters and of ambassadors, of artists and of fashionable idlers. But a foreigner coming to France, imbued with the notion that austerity is the badge of the earnest Republican, suffers a pang of disillusion when he recognises legislators of the Republic among the familiar frequenters of the backstairs of the opera-house, even though he be aware that in Paris a man's innocence and respectability are no more questioned if he passes an occasional half-hour in that nimble resort, than in London if he spends his evenings in the lobby of the House of Commons.

M. Garnier's gilded edifice is officially known as the National Academy of Music. It is a sub-department of the State, depending on the Ministry of Fine Arts, and the agile members of the *corps-de-ballet* are functionaries of the Republic. Like other public servants in France they are poorly paid, and the recognition of this fact constitutes a peril for the representatives of the nation to whom those amiable persons address their grievances. Hence it was that when the Panama scandal overshadowed France, stories were rife of this or that public man having had recourse to the funds subscribed by peasants for the piercing of the Isthmus, to supplement the official salary of a dancer who threatened to desert her Republican protector for a rich Reactionary whose income did not depend on services rendered to the State. There may have been isolated cases of this description; but it was not to provide for the irregular pleasures of politicians that political corruption was introduced into the Republic. To judge from the cases on which most light was thrown, the motive inducing public men to make illicit profit out of a political career has usually been a desire of consolidating a position of worldly prosperity and outward respectability.

Nevertheless, the Republic has not exercised a good influence as the public guardian of decency, compared even with the

decried Imperial regime. A Republican who with his pen helped to upset it, and who later was a well-known Opportunist deputy, was constrained to make this avowal: "The famous corruption of the Empire, how innocent it would seem if put side by side with the depravity unredeemed by good-humour which has succeeded it!"¹ Tolerance of the unseemly has indeed made sensible progress since the days when under the Second Empire *Madame Bovary* was the object of a Government prosecution as an immoral publication. The indictment of Flaubert's masterpiece was ridiculous; but the fact that the Empire could undertake such a prosecution proves that the official sense of decency was less dormant than it is under the Republic. Books of the class which in those days were read by stealth, are now exposed for sale in the windows of the boulevards; and the word "pornographic," then only familiar to the curious in the literature of the eighteenth century, has come into common usage to connote a class of journal as unmistakably as others are designated Reactionary, or Radical, or Clerical. The illustrations of such papers, exposed for sale in the streets, are of a character which would have insured their seizure by the police under the Empire. Here the Third Republic may be charged with having sinned actively as well as passively, for there is at least one instance of its ministers having decorated with the Legion of Honour the editor of an organ of blackmail as well as of lubricity.

These are not the animadversions of Reactionary desire to asperse the Republic, or of alien prudery. The foremost to deplore what is here described are Frenchmen of tried Republicanism. M. Bérenger is a Republican whose record of patriotic services is remarkable. Though a peaceful magistrate, he was wounded in the War; after which he was a deputy of the National Assembly and a minister under M. Thiers. Since then an irremovable senator and a member of the Institut, he is one of the few French legislators whose names are associated with

¹ M. Henri Fouquier, for some years Republican Deputy for the Basses Alpes, in a review of the *Souvenirs du Marquis de Massa* 1840-71 (April 30, 1897).

useful legislation, he being the author of the "Béranger Laws" in favour of first offenders. He conceived the idea of restraining the exposure in the public streets of pictures and inscriptions, from the view of which women and children ought to be protected, and the result of his efforts was to bring down upon him a shower of contumely not experienced by any of the culprits in the Panama affair. Nor in his laudable effort did he receive any support from the Government of the Republic. Its supineness was possibly another proof of the ineptitude of the parliamentary system; for to insure the passing of a law which excites the opposition of the mob a strong Government is required. It is probably the fear that its career may be shortened by a month or two that restrains any Ministry from courageously exercising its power of censorship in conspicuous places of Parisian entertainment. M. Sarcey has been quoted in these pages as a Republican as well as a critic. No one more tenaciously than he resented the interference of the Imperial censor. No one was ever more tolerant of the broad forms of national wit handed down from Rabelais and Molière. Yet he, under the Third Republic, has protested week after week against the revolting language put into the mouths of performers on public scenes, which would inevitably have been erased by the censor in the prodigal days of the Empire, before M. Ferry's period of austere virtue had commenced, when the extreme of license was thought to have been reached in the brilliant couplets which led MM. Meilhac and Halévy to seats in the French Academy. At that period, however, M. Taine was a contributor to *La Vie Parisienne*.

VI

It has been said in favour of Republican license that it is not attractive, and that proposition deserves a short examination. It is true that by a perversity which sometimes affects even well-balanced minds the same conduct which would seem of vulgar impropriety, if followed under certain circumstances,

assumes under others an air of romance, even though the actors be the same. The evolution of the First Republic into the Empire supplies samples of this phenomenon. We will not scrutinise the actions of Napoleon, for he, whether Emperor or not, was a great conqueror—all his actions, even the basest, being illumined with the glow of military glory, and the vicissitudes of Josephine too are gilded with the reflex of its rays.

If, however, we ponder on the career of her daughter, we may wonder what would have been the place in history of Hortense Beauharnais, if the First Consul had not become Emperor, and if her husband, Louis Bonaparte, had never by fraternal grace been called King of Holland. The doubtful paternity of Louis Napoleon, and the certain maternity of M. de Morny, would have been unattractive scandals in a revolutionary family of loose repute,—like those which the chronicles of the Directory abound in, interesting only to the curious student of the period. But Queen Hortense is a romantic figure, less material than Catherine of Russia, less tragic than Marie Stuart, yet classed in men's minds in their category; and her crown, unreal though it was, served as a halo for her gallantries. So we make the pilgrimage to Arenenberg to gaze on her features in marble; and we compare the sentimental ripple of her *Partant pour la Syrie* with the fierce wave of the *Marseillaise*, admiring the variety of a Revolution which provided a land with two national anthems so dissimilar.

From this instance it might be inferred that royal rank, whether the heritage of birth or of chance, gives a glamour to irregularity, and that therefore the unattractiveness of Republican license helps to make a Republic a more salutary form of government. If the sole function of a regime were to afford a pattern of life and morals to the people this might be so. Good example is, however, a merely casual attribute of Governments. But a pleasure-loving Court, even if it be more graceful in its diversions than are the councillors of a Republic, is more exposed to view, and should a day of retribution arrive, even its innocent pastimes are exaggerated into crimes. This was

the fate of Marie Antoinette. She was no queen of hazard, but the daughter of the Cæsars, married to the chief of the dynasty which for eight centuries had ruled over the nation it had created. When that nation arose and made the royal pair the first conspicuous victims of its grievances, even the youthful levity of the high-spirited queen, in the days of her splendour, was distorted to prove the depravity of the Court, until her libellous torturers persuaded the populace that she was capable of vices which the consorts of Claudius and of Marcus Aurelius would have blushed for.

From Versailles on the eve of the Fall of the Bastille to the Tuileries on the eve of the Prussian war is a long step. Between the refined prodigality of the last courtiers of the ancient Monarchy and the audacious pranks of the Imperial revellers was all the difference that there is between the stately measures of the gavottes danced at Trianon or Bagatelle and the dishevelled rhythm with which Offenbach interpreted the spirit of the Second Empire. But between the Court, which inspired Burke with his famous fancy of vice losing half its evil in losing all its grossness, and its boisterous counterfeit, which reached its zenith when Sadowa was preparing the way for Sedan, there is this point of resemblance: each was denounced as an immoral example of arbitrary government, the extravagances of which had brought an unconniving nation into an abyss. The causes which produced the great Revolution are too complex ever to be treated incidentally; but whatever justice or injustice is contained in that appreciation of the Second Empire this much may be said. If it were true that a lax moral code was then inculcated by an arbitrary Government, the nation could retain its self-respect while it looked on and regretted evils which it could not remedy. But if the sense of decency be dulled under a parliamentary Republic which has no Court to set an example, and no head the removal of which would affect the organism of the governmental body, the democracy itself becomes the accomplice of the evil that prevails. If M. Sarcey or M. Béranger, or any other Republicans of equally dissimilar temperament, deplore

that the license of the streets or of popular resorts is more flagrant than under the Empire, they cannot adopt M. Ferry's apostrophe. They cannot throw the blame on a corrupt despotism, delivery from which will give power to the people to purify the land. Thus it comes to pass that however unseductive the forms moral laxity may take under a Republic, its prevalence may be of greater detriment to the nation than when displayed less repellantly under a punishable regime.

For ills of this nature, which are said to be more glaring under the Third Republic than under the Second Empire, it is probable that a strong Executive would be more efficacious than the good example of highly-placed persons; for respect for authority is of such a nature in France that it is by no means certain that the exemplary virtues of good rulers have any effect on the public. It would be unbecoming to refer to the intimate character and conduct of living men; but in general terms it may be said that in their private lives and surroundings the Chiefs of the State since the War have been models of orderly propriety. M. Grévy's legitimate affections, indeed, were so strong that they incapacitated him from the honest performance of public duty; while his successor, M. Carnot, furnished the spectacle of domestic virtue of the highest order. His moral standard was not that of a grasping peasant, but combined with dignified display and unsullied probity was worthy of the descendant of the Director who denounced the public and private immorality of his colleagues.¹ It cannot be said that the life and example of that excellent President produced a chastening effect on the tone of the popular ballads or the matter of the popular prints circulated and sung in the capital during his term of office; and these the Republican censors of the Republic regard as the outward signs.

Whether a constitutional sovereign of M. Carnot's character would have exercised more influence in this direction is doubtful;

¹ In the *Histoire du Directoire*, by M. Ludovic Sciout, there are remarkable appreciations by Carnot on the conduct and character of his co-directors, Rewbell, Barras, and La Révellière Lépiaux.

but it may be mentioned that the two most serious pretenders to restore the Monarchy in France were men of austere regularity in their domestic relations. It is indeed worthy of remark that the Comte de Chambord, who was descended from Louis XV., and the Comte de Paris, who was descended from the Regent d'Orléans, should have put their respective forefathers to shame in rivalling one another in domestic perfection, which, though a pleasing spectacle for the peasants of Lower Austria and of Buckinghamshire, was not permitted to influence the French nation. Those illustrious exiles seemed in their tournament of virtue to wish to recall to the world that their common ancestor was not Henri IV., of gallant and popular memory, but St. Louis. The son of the Duc de Berry, burdened with the tradition of being a Child of Miracle, modelled his life on a rule more fitted for a cloister than for a palace, a council-chamber, or a parade-ground; and in marrying a princess whose vocation was that of a Carmelite, he displayed in the circumstances of his life and death that there are heights of virtue and perfection to which it is expedient that the secular leaders of people should not attain.

Amid the evils which civilisation submits us to, it is a consolation that the wisdom of the ancients is unimpaired in its contact with the ages. Never more than now was it salutary to know that virtue is moderation, and that no man is virtuous who goes to extremes. An example of the truth of that eternal verity is given in the ending of the lives of two men both called in the later years of the century to rule over France. The one, descended from a line of kings, refused the throne of his fathers because of scruples nurtured in an oratory, which would not thrive in the modern State when exposed to atmosphere neither dim nor mystic. So he died in exile with the renown of a bigot whose zealotry could not be pierced with sentiments of patriotism. The other, a child of the people, called to the supreme power after the defection of the last of the Kings of France, brought to his high office qualities also requiring self-denial and discipline which likewise would have been virtues in another sphere; and

M. Grévy died an outcast from office which he was deemed to have turned to base purposes. The defect of the President of the Republic was the setting of too great store on the things of this world ; that of the Comte de Chambord was his exclusive attention to those of the world to come. The material virtue of thrift in the one, and the spiritual virtue of mysticism in the other were carried to such an extreme that in their respective spheres those two sons of France are held up as examples of what chiefs of a people should not be.

BOOK IV

POLITICAL PARTIES

CHAPTER I

THE GROUP SYSTEM

SINCE representative institutions were introduced in France, whatever form they have taken, the spectacle has never been witnessed of the Legislature steadfastly divided into two sections, the members of each united to oppose the other by similarity of political professions. We have observed how inconvenient is the absence of this arrangement, which in England forms the basis of the party system, and how small is the prospect of its advent in France. The existence, in the English Parliament, of two parties, descended respectively from the Court and Country factions of the seventeenth century, has become so ingrained in the sentiment of the nation, that though the traditions of their origin are almost all dead, the whole population of Great Britain, as well as its representatives in the Legislature, continues to divide itself into two political camps, designated by changing epithets, such as Liberal and Tory, to distinguish them. Indeed, so popular is this plan that it is probable that the majority of British electors of ripe age have from time to time given each side the benefit of their support. With such mechanical precision is the displacement of votes anticipated, that this process is commonly compared to the swing of a pendulum, thus showing that the system is the outcome of habit and organisation rather than of principle.

In France, since the Revolution, instead of the change of Ministries, the rise and fall of dynasties and of constitutions have

reflected the varying moods of the nation.¹ At the beginning, in 1789, there was no foundation upon which to build a party system. The layers of the nation were divided horizontally into the Estates of the Realm, and not vertically as in England, where the Three Estates existed and performed functions, but neither of them ever attempted to act as a solid corporation opposed to the others. When in France the Third Estate overwhelmed the other two, there were reformers who hoped that from the Revolution would come forth a Constitution which, under Louis XVI., would develop on the lines of the English model. But the parliamentarians went the way of the King; and when the new constitutional Monarchy had perished on the scaffold, the Republic was not composed of elements likely to produce the orderly working of party government. The early groups in the Convention had some pretence of principle in their cohesion, such as the Federalism of the Girondins. The Mountain prevailed and the Moderates were beheaded; so then the rival sects had little else than the name of their leaders to designate them, and thus distinguished the Dantonists followed the Hébertists to the guillotine. Had not Thermidor sent Robespierre to the same fate, that sanguinary autocrat would have treated parties and other parliamentary institutions as did five years later Bonaparte, of whom he was the civilian prototype.

A quarter of a century after the assembling of the States-General, revolutionary dictatorship was swept out of France, and when the Bourbons were restored a parliamentary Constitution was first tried. Then, as the restoration of the legitimate dynasty to the throne of the decapitated King seemed to resemble the recall of the Stuarts to England, after the interregnum following the execution of Charles I., the fancy was cherished that the

¹ An incident related by Tocqueville on the day that the Monarchy of July fell illustrates this. On his way to the Chamber on February 24, 1848, he was stopped crossing the Champs Élysées by the mob, and one of the men asked him where he was going. "Je répondis 'à la Chambre,' et j'ajoutai pour lui montrer que j'étais de l'opposition 'vive la Réforme: vous savez que le Ministère Guizot est chassé?'" "Oui, Monsieur, je le sais," me répondit cet homme en me montrant les Tuileries, 'mais nous voulons mieux que cela.'"—*Souvenirs d'Alexis de Tocqueville*, partie 1, c. 14.

political system of France was henceforth to follow the English model. The conflict between ultra-Royalists and Liberals presented a faint analogy with the early struggles of Whig and Tory in the seventeenth century; yet the system of groups at once made its appearance in the Lower House of Parliament, elected on a limited franchise by the class most disposed to admire the institutions of England, which it conceived had strengthened our nation to be the only one in Europe not to bow the knee to Bonaparte. Thus in 1818 we find the Chamber divided into four distinct groups. These were the "Ultras," who believed in divine right and passive obedience; the Ministerialists of the Centre, who were the opportunists of that day; the Doctrinaires, specially so designated, who professed to be the exponents of the pure doctrine of representative government;¹ and the Liberals who demanded the literal fulfilment of the Charter, the constitutional basis of the Restoration.

In these artificial groupings two sections of the nation were unrepresented:—the survivors of 1793, who were hanging on the Jacobin traditions of the Revolution; and those soldiers of Napoleon who regarded as worse enemies than English, Russian, or Prussian, the Royalists, whose king had proclaimed to the French the downfall at Waterloo of the glories of France as "the dissipation of the satellites of the tyrant by the puissant efforts of our allies."² So, at the birth of parliamentary government in France, it was made manifest why it would never be perfected by its essential complement, the party system. Not only had the Revolution, unlike similar movements in England, divided the nation into several instead of into two rival camps; but an

¹ The term Doctrinaire came into use under the Restoration to connote the opinions of this group in Parliament, it having previously been used only as an ecclesiastical term. In his essay on Royer-Collard, the chief of the Doctrinaires, Sainte-Beuve thus refers to the history of the word: "Par une sorte de prédestination qui s'accusait même dans les noms, il avait fait ses premières études chez les Pères de la doctrine chrétienne, autrement dits Doctrinaires" (*Nouveaux Lundis*: 16 Février 1863). In these pages I have sometimes used it, as it is often used in France, in a wider signification, as the epithet of French Liberals generally, who were the exponents of the doctrine of 1789. The term seems to be used by English publicists somewhat loosely, almost as an equivalent for theorist.

² Proclamation dated from Cateau-Cambrésis, June 22, 1815.

Assembly, recruited from only two of the national parties, showed the inevitable tendency to subdivide into groups. The group system had precisely the same effect on the stability of Ministries in these early days of parliamentary government under hereditary monarchy as under the Third Republic. At the end of 1818, in little more than four years (not counting the Hundred Days of the revived Empire), thirty-six changes of portfolio had taken place; and the pamphleteers of the period compared this record of about fifty months with the fifty years' reign of Louis XV., who in all his councils had only fifty-seven ministers.

When the junior branch of the Bourbons was carried by popular voice to the throne of the legitimate kings, then the analogy between the abdications of Charles X. and of James II. renewed the fancy that the history of the British Constitution was being reproduced in France with its party system. It was a vain illusion. On the morrow of the Revolution of July, Parliament resolved itself into half a dozen groups which had little connection with past political history.¹ They were not born even of the brief tradition of forty years, but came into being like their truculent predecessors of the Convention and the milder coteries of the Restoration, to prove that any political assembly of Frenchmen must needs split up into sections.

The Second Empire was not a parliamentary regime, so there was no question of party government while it lasted. The most famous Opposition in the Corps Législatif consisted of five deputies, so it would not have been easy for it to split up into groups; but when in 1863 thirty-five deputies hostile to the Government were returned, the inevitable process began, and arrayed in several companies, they gave battle to the Empire.²

¹ From 1834 to 1837 the groups in the Chamber were classed as *Légitimistes*, *Centre droit*, *Centre Ministériel*, *Centre gauche*, *Gauche dynastique* and *Radicaux*, the first and the last being the least numerous. Thureau-Dangin, *Hist. de la Monarchie de Juillet*, vol. iii. c. 4. It will be observed that the Bonapartists were not recognised as a separate group.

² The celebrated "*Cinq*" of the Opposition before 1863 were MM. Darimon, Jules Favre, Hénou, Picard, and Émile Ollivier, of whom the last eventually rallied to the Empire. MM. Thiers, Berryer, and Jules Simon with others were elected in 1863, and Gambetta and Jules Ferry in 1869. In a forgotten book by

Whatever the numbers of the unofficial minority, the Second Empire had one marked effect on the conception of parliamentary government in France. Under it the members of the Opposition, whether Republican or Monarchical, cherished the idea that the duty of an Opposition was not to oppose a Ministry in office, as that would have been futile under the Imperial Constitution, but to injure, in the hope of destroying, the existing regime.

After the war the National Assembly, elected in 1871, seemed to be capable of resolving itself into two great sections; though, as one of them was Monarchical and the other Republican, they were not adapted for trying the experiment of constitutional party government. Yet before the Assembly had decided on the regime to be set over France, the Monarchical majority and the Republican minority had shown that they both were ill-organised collections of mutually jealous groups. The Orleanists and the Legitimists renewed the feuds of a previous generation, which the Bonapartists hoped to profit from; and when the Comte de Paris essayed an ill-starred remedy by making his submission to the heir of Charles X., the Comte de Chambord responded to his kinsman's unfilial act by embroiling the united Royalists with the white flag discarded by Louis Philippe. The princes could not have destroyed the Monarchical cause had their followers been inspired with a spirit of unity. But the Legitimists of the National Assembly outvied the contumely of their chief for the Orleanists, and when called to nominate life-members of the Senate on its creation, they voted, as we have seen, for Republicans, to keep out their hated fellow-Monarchists.

The Republicans of the Assembly, though superior in intelligence to the Reactionaries, founding the Republic with the aid of a Monarchical majority, showed the same incapacity of cohesion. Indeed, but for the preternatural folly of the Royalists, neither the authority of M. Thiers nor the resourceful genius of Gambetta would have saved the Republic from being wrecked by

M. Émile Ollivier, entitled *Le 19 Janvier*, published the year before the War as a complacent apology for his adhesion to the Empire, for which, when liberalised, he predicted a glorious and popular career, he gives an analysis of the groups of the Opposition after the elections of 1863.

the irresistible group-forming tendency of French politicians. The Extreme Left, instead of fortifying M. Thiers, when President of the Republic, against the Reactionaries, opposed him with the result that he was displaced by Marshal MacMahon, as a Royalist Chief of the State, in May 1873. The *coup d'état* of the Seize Mai, four years later, united all the Republican groups for a moment; but as soon as that extraneous motive for union had passed, the internecine jealousies of Republicans showed that it was not on questions of principle and of policy that Ministries would rise and fall under the Third Republic. It was natural that antagonism should exist between Liberals of the Left Centre and Radicals or their allies the men of the Commune. But it was not the combats between the Moderates and the Extreme Left which made ministerial instability a stereotyped feature of the Third Republic after it had passed into the hands of Republicans. The groups which destroyed Gambetta and disputed his succession were composed of men who professed his opinions; and when a like fate overtook the ablest of them, M. Jules Ferry, it was not by the victims of his anti-clerical policy that he was driven from public life, but by politicians who had favoured his intolerant measures.

In 1896 the Third Republic, having existed twenty-six years, attained an age which is double the average duration of the previous regimes established in France since the overthrow of the Monarchy in 1792.¹ During the last quarter of that period the

¹ This calculation is made by reckoning as one regime the First Republic under its various phases from 1792 to the proclamation of the Empire, and by not taking into account the Hundred Days as a separate regime. In this way the seventy-eight years from August 1792 to September 1870 were occupied by six distinct regimes, the average duration of each being thirteen years. Thus, in round figures :—

Republic 1792-1804	12 years
First Empire 1804-1814	10 „
Restoration 1814-1830	16 „
Monarchy of July 1830-1848	18 „
Second Republic 1848-1852	4 „
Second Empire 1852-1870	18 „

Of course, if all the Constitutions set up in France in the interval be counted the average will be reduced by one-half; but thirteen years is a fairer average to take as the duration of regimes since the abolition of the old Monarchy.

Reactionaries who desired to change the form of government reduced themselves to insignificance. It is therefore clear that if ever the party system had to appear in the French Parliament, no time, since the Revolution, has been so favourable for its introduction. But little sign has been perceived of any tendency to govern the country by the alternate advent to office of two distinct constitutional parties. For years successive Prime Ministers had formed their ephemeral cabinets of politicians drawn from various Republican groups, and the substitution for this system of "concentration," as it was called, of Ministries more homogeneous in composition was for a year or two spoken of as though it were the harbinger of an era of party government. Though this transient arrangement gave some small semblance to a defined party rivalry between Moderates and Radicals, its effect was imperceptible in the country while in Parliament the same anarchy prevailed.

No doubt the extinction, as a force to be reckoned with, of the Monarchists who wished to put an end to the Republic, was an opportunity for the trial of constitutional party government; but mere occasion does not change nature or tradition. The political institutions of a modern State are the outcome of the temperament of its people, as developed by gradual evolution or modified by violent convulsion; and the idea of introducing the party system into the French Parliament is a chimerical dream of theorists who close their eyes to that historical truth. The only mode of dividing the nation into two parties which the French understand is the plebiscite; and parliamentarians most opposed to it cannot help showing that their only conception of the party system is as a plebiscitary organisation. Republicans brought up in the school which opposed the Second Empire, who can never drop the tradition of that epoch that the Government of the day is the enemy, no matter what its policy, show, in their defence of the practice of wrecking Ministries, how paramount is that conception in the French mind. M. Maret, a Radical of the old type, an antagonist of dictatorship, whether practised by Louis Napoleon or portended by Gambetta, saw in the prospect of a

strong parliamentary majority, giving stability to a Ministry, the practical results of a plebiscite. "If," he said, "a majority of this quality should be found in the Chamber, what were the good of a Parliament at all? The day after a general election, the Ministry put in office would have nothing to do but to count its partisans once for all, and then the deputies might retire to their homes for four years. What is the use of debating and of voting if the results are settled beforehand?"¹ It is needless to expose the fallacies of this argument. The proof that this or other equally unsound conceptions of parliamentary government prevail among French politicians is that, for twenty-eight years, the elect of universal suffrage have shown no sign of ranging themselves into two solid parties. Admirers of the group system need have no misgivings. The parliamentary Republic will to its end display the same precariousness of ministerial existence, the same perpetual prospect of a crisis, ever keeping alive the unrestful feeling that the Republic itself, growing middle-aged, is only a provisional expedient.

The following review of political groups and parties in the French Parliament and electorate will perhaps show that if the Republic be not regarded indubitably as the permanent form of government, this is not the result of the energy or intelligence of its enemies; and that its weaknesses, which one day may make the nation glad to be rid of it, are inherent, less to the Republican form of government than to the parliamentary system.

French politicians, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, may be conveniently classed in six categories,² some of them comprising several recognised groups, and each of them sloping down to an undefined border. It would be impossible to arrange them in order of importance, as that changes from

¹ *Radical*, November 2, 1896.

² The *Temps* on the eve of the general election of May 1898, in spite of its desire to see the party system introduced in France, divided the 2038 candidates for 281 seats into eleven different groups:—Progressists (Opportunists), Radicals, Radical-Socialists, Socialists, Ralliés, Revisionists, Monarchists, Christian Socialists, Bonapartists, Independents, and Nationalists. It further subdivided the Socialists into four sections, making fourteen groups in all.

year to year ; so the most methodical plan will be to consider them according to the traditional occupation of places in the Houses of Legislature, observed first in the Constituent Assembly of 1789,¹ passing from right to left. Thus, first will come the anti-Republican Right, including all adversaries of the existing regime, whether called Royalists or Bonapartists, Conservatives or Revisionists. Next come the politicians known as Ralliés, former members of the anti-Republican parties, who, for various motives, have accepted the Republic. In the third category are the Liberals, including the remnant of the old Left Centre and survivors of the doctrinaires, as well as a large number of persons who under all regimes have a dread of overturning existing institutions. In the fourth rank are the Opportunists, who latterly have preferred to call themselves Progressists—a vague category, of which office-holding has been the chief characteristic. They sometimes claim the succession of the Moderates, but they also have been frequently associated with the Radicals, the fifth class, of which the left division has of late years been occupied by the Socialists, who have attained sufficient importance to be treated separately.

Some of these groups or parties, from their actual condition, might seem unworthy of attention. One has fallen into decrepitude ; of another animation has been so long suspended that life appears to be extinct ; another is interesting no longer as an active force, but only as the repository of a tradition. If the history of France resembled that of other modern nations, it would be as needless here to treat of some of the ancient parties as it would be, in studying contemporary England and the United States, to pay attention to the Anti-Corn-Law Leaguers and the Abolitionists, or even to the Jacobites and the United Empire Loyalists. But France is the land of political surprises, where lost causes come to life again ; and a party or a group

¹ "In all the Legislative Assemblies, from the Constituent Assembly to the present time, the deputies who are friends of privilege have been placed on the right side, and the defenders of the rights of citizens on the left."—*Vocabulaire des mots et dénominations qui servent à faire connaître les Assemblées Législatives etc. de la Révolution Française*. Paris, 1820.

discredited and almost obsolete in the closing hours of the old century may, at the dawn of the new one, be active and acclaimed. Moreover, in recognising meanwhile the consolidation of the Republic, one must, in order to understand it, study the vicissitudes of factions within and without it.

CHAPTER II

THE ROYALISTS

I

WHEN the Comte de Paris died in 1894, the most pathetic circumstance attending his death was its complete insignificance to Europe or to France. The disappearance of the Prince Imperial, for all his immaturity, was an important event, removing the hopes and fears of the partisans and adversaries of plebiscitary dictatorship. The death of the Comte de Chambord was also momentous in taking away an impotent pretender whose existence paralysed the action of the Monarchists, still a considerable minority of the electorate. The heir of Louis Philippe, whose experience was as much greater than that of the youthful Bonaparte as were his qualities superior to those of his Legitimist kinsman, died without affecting the human movement outside the circle of his mourning relatives. The series of seemingly deliberate acts whereby he reduced himself to nullity was one of the causes of the consolidation of the Republic. Certain phases of national character, pertinent to our study of contemporary France, are illustrated by the incidents of his failure to recover his heritage of the constitutional Monarchy, representing the one great principle of the Revolution which has survived a hundred years—the investiture of the middle-class with the monopoly of political power. The bringing to scorn of Monarchical sentiment in the minds of the French people has been chiefly due to the folly and perversity of the Royalist party ; but

the destruction of that particular form of it known as Orleanism was the almost unaided work of the Comte de Paris.

If any Frenchman seemed to benefit from the afflictions of France in its year of disaster it was the aged statesman who was most active in devising means to alleviate them. M. Thiers at the close of the Empire was already chafing at his long absence from power; so when the ill-fortune of war raised him to the highest eminence in the land he had no wish to descend, even to become an all-powerful mayor of the palace of a king. His rule might have been less brief had he joined his influence to the forces then ready to bear to the throne the grandson of his old master Louis Philippe. But not foreseeing that two years was his allotted span of power, M. Thiers did his utmost to make an Orleanist restoration impossible, and one of his subtlest devices took the guise of an act of justice. Louis Napoleon, harsher to the Orleans princes than the Third Republic has been, not only confirmed the law which banished them in 1848, but virtually confiscated their French property. So M. Thiers moved the National Assembly in 1872 to award them a compensation of two millions sterling, the acceptance of which he utilised as an implied renunciation of their dynastic pretensions. The resources of France were strained by the payment of the war indemnity to Germany. Consequently, while the Comte de Paris and his relatives had, as private citizens, a right to take the money, in not refusing it they lost the opportunity of touching, by a royal act of generosity, the imagination of the nation, which, execrating the memory of the Second Empire and alarmed at the excesses of the Commune, was ready to hail a liberal and democratic Monarchy. The share received by the Comte de Paris was not excessive. The splendid bequest of Chantilly to the Institute of France by the Duc d'Aumale was one day to prove that to increase the family store was not the ruling passion of the Orleans. Nevertheless, to his dying day the chief of the house realised how formidable a weapon was forged with this gold to be hurled in his face on every occasion.¹

¹ The following shows how well M. Thiers calculated the effect of the trans-

This initial blunder would have counted for little had the Comte de Paris been endowed with the dashing qualities which the French ever desire and rarely obtain in their rulers. His pacific temperament possibly accounted for his second and irreparable error. His submission in 1873 to the Comte de Chambord, then of an age which promised him a score of years to live, showed his willingness to defer his own claims to the throne. The expediency of fusing the Legitimist and Orleanist parties, which united had a majority in the Representative Assembly, was a reason of State sufficient to impel an inactive man to remain inert. It was not an adequate excuse for the heir of the Monarchy of July to repudiate the tradition of his family. Implying that Louis Philippe was a usurper he posed, not as the grandson of a king, but as a "Vicomte de Chambord," as was wittily remarked on the centenary of Valmy, the revolutionary victory where his grandfather won his spurs, by an Academician who had devoted his pen to the Monarchical cause.¹

In humiliating his cousin by responding to his homage with the repudiation of the tricolour,² the symbol of the Monarchy of

action on French sentiment, and how durable and exaggerated a use Republicans made of it. M. Vacquerie, an old Radical, who was already known as the author of *Antigone* when Louis Philippe was on the throne, wrote of the Pretender in 1892, "An exile, the Republic reopened the gates of France to him. France was then drained of blood and money. To tear herself from the enemy's grip she had to borrow five milliards. What was the first filial act of the Comte de Paris? it was to present a bill of fifty millions of francs." Two days after his death the following appeared in the *Lyon Républicain* and other provincial papers:—"On the whole we did well to throw in the face of this grasping family the gold which might have healed many a wound. With money we got rid of both Prussians and Pretender. All the same, with this ransom we might have paid for several batteries of artillery, or men-of-war," etc. etc.

¹ M. Hervé, *Soleil*, October 4, 1892.

² Certain Orleanists declare that the white flag was a late invention of Louis XIV., who made it the royal standard about 1661, and that the Comte de Chambord, in declaring that "Henri V. would not abandon the colours of Henri IV.," had a false notion of the history of his family insignia. They call attention to a famous picture by Rubens in the Louvre representing Henri IV. with Marie de Médicis, wherein the royal standard is represented as "bleu semé de fleurs de lys d'or"; this being corroborated by the "*portulans*" preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the old map-books of mariners in which French possessions were designated by the blue flag. Although the Orleans family has no legitimate blood of Louis XIV. in its veins, this was probably not the reason why Louis Philippe took every occasion of repudiating the white colours. M. de Barante relates that in 1845 the King told him, that being in England in 1802 he was at a

July, the elder Bourbon seemed to give the Comte de Paris a lesson in filial piety. The childless man made the white flag a pretext. He would not disturb his semi-monastic life merely to secure the succession for the descendants of the kinsman who usurped his grandfather's crown and outraged his mother. It was in vain that the Comte de Paris further humbled himself before his obsolete relative by undutifully docking the respectable name of Louis Philippe, which he had received from the Citizen King of the French. When as Philippe VII. he succeeded Henri V. in the fifty-fourth year of that monarch's reign (Charles X. having abdicated in 1830), at the obsequies of his predecessor at Goritz some obscure foreign Bourbons were told to pass before the new King of France and Navarre.¹

The Comte de Paris thus accepted the support of the Legitimists, whatever it was worth, aware of their reservation that the authors of his existence were the most despicable of human beings. I used often to see in his last days the head of a family eminent before the Revolution, who had been the playmate of the Duc de Bordeaux, as the Child of Miracle was called in his infancy. This venerable gentleman, who, after 1883, looked upon the Comte de Paris as his king, being punctilious in his visits to the exile of Stowe, and referring to him with the courtly deference of the Old Regime, if ever his sovereign's parentage were alluded to would exclaim, "Mais Louis Philippe fut un gredin comme son père." The Comte de Paris knew that his Legitimist friends regarded his grandfather's action in 1830 as a crime as dark as that of Philippe Égalité on the winter's night of 1793, when amid the silence of the Convention he prefaced his vote for the King's death with grim hypocrisies about duty and

review to which "Monsieur," afterwards Louis XVIII., came wearing the white cockade, and on being asked why he did not also sport those colours, he told his cousin that nothing would ever induce him to wear the "livery of the émigrés" (*Souvenirs du Baron de Barante*, I.). A form of the tricolour was in use under the old Monarchy as the ensign of the "maison du roi."

¹ In the *Almanach de Gotha* of the years preceding the submission of the Comte de Paris his name was printed "*Louis-Philippe* Albert d'Orléans," with the first two names italicised. After the pilgrimage to Frohsdorf "Louis" was unitalicised.

conviction. No doubt that view is logical. If divine right be admitted, the guilt of a person who by his vote took the three hundred and eighty-seventh part in the responsibility for the death of a king without benefiting from the regicide, is of less degree than that of one who, having abetted the deposition of a monarch, was the chief to profit from it by usurping his throne. In England we appreciate such transactions differently perhaps because we are not a logical people. In our Book of Common Prayer—admirable monument of the salutary inconsistency of our nation—forty years ago we used publicly to express penitence for cutting off the head of Charles I., and jubilation for dis-crowning the head of his son. But we have lived and prospered for two centuries under an Orleanist Monarchy, as was observed by M. Guizot and the Liberals, who thought, by finding far-fetched analogies between the English and the French Revolutions, to perpetuate the dynasty of 1830.

One need not have an Englishman's leanings towards statutory Monarchy to be amazed that any prince of the House of Orleans should repudiate that notable epoch. It is the fragment of the century which Frenchmen can look back upon with most satisfaction. Inglorious it may have been in the eyes of the veterans of the "Grande Armée," whose emotion at the second burial of the Emperor in the Invalides spread till Louis Bonaparte was summoned to revive the glories of France with cannonadings, which began in the streets of Paris and ended at Sedan. But the glories of the reign of Louis Philippe were more durable than those of victories.

The nation was prosperous, and the acquisition of wealth was encouraged; but its mere possession did not alone confer rank under Louis Philippe as it does under the Third Republic, and as it will under any restored form of Monarchy or Empire. The salon, which the plutocracy has helped the Republic to destroy, survived, and the constitutional phase of the Revolution was a golden season of art and letters. In the French Academy, for the first and only time since Louis XIII. issued to Cardinal Richelieu the patent for its foundation, half the chairs were

filled by famous men. Fifty years ago the reign, soon suddenly to expire, had gathered under the dome of the Palais Mazarin a most illustrious company. It included Mignet, Scribe, Molé, Guizot, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Villemain, Barante, Alfred de Vigny, Thiers, Tocqueville, Mérimée, Sainte-Beuve, Pasquier, Cousin, Lamartine, and half a dozen others whose merit, though less resounding, would give them to-day a high place in European letters. Of future Academicians, Sandeau, Augier, and Ponsard had scored their first successes in the drama; Alfred de Musset had produced his most perfect work; Lacordaire, Dupanloup, and Montalembert in the mystic sciences, Berryer in eloquence, Jules Janin and Nisard in criticism, were all at various stages of their fame. There were other brilliant names, never to be inscribed on the roll of the Institute, which would have made the renown of a less favoured time. George Sand proved for once that the sex excluded from academies could be inspired with genius. Dumas had immortalised his Mousquetaires, Balzac had finished his Human Comedy, Théophile Gautier was emblazoning the pages of the romantic school. The ballads of Béranger, the essays of Lamennais, the histories of Thierry and of Michelet were displaying the infinite variety of the epoch. It has been said in criticism of the constitution of the Académie Française that supposing all the worthiest were elected to that body, in no country and at no period could forty living names of the first rank in letters be found. Even though this were true of the age of Louis XIV. and of its wondrous successor, after the lapse of half a century, which tests the value of literature, it seems as though the reign of Louis Philippe had that exceptional quality.

If this were the place to eulogise the Monarchy of July, the genius of its painters would have to be lauded when Corot translated to canvas the poetry of the landscape, and Ingres ennobled for posterity the features of his contemporaries. Scientific discovery and industrial enterprise would also call for praise. But far from being borne to extol the parliamentary Monarchy, I am disposed rather to criticise it as unsuited to

the nation which it was set over, as the brevity of its duration showed. The talent which France brought forth under Louis Philippe was not the produce of the Revolution of July and of its improved parliamentary system. It was part of the wonderful renaissance which had begun under the Restoration, after the barren years of turmoil and glory succeeding the great change of things; and many of the names which illustrated the epoch were those of opponents of the dynasty who hastened its downfall. My intention in adverting to the lustre of the reign is to point out how insensate was the ingratitude of the Comte de Paris in professing to ignore it. Disdaining the respectable name associated with that era of art, letters, science, and industry, he would not be a Louis Philippe II.¹ But as in the Middle Ages, when France was a strip of Gaul straitened by the domains of Brittany, Burgundy, Provence, and England, the first of the Valois kings had made the name of Philippe the sign of defeat and oppression, the Comte de Paris would fain have become Philippe VII., the successor of Philippe VI., who lost the Battle of Crécy and established the gabelle, the salt-tax, which remained an odious heritage till it helped to end the old Monarchy.

Though such considerations had little to do with the small place which the Comte de Paris had in the affections of the French people, the possession of a character capable of prompting such conduct explains how this chief of the Orleans family killed Orleanism. So little trace of it remains in the land that it is not easy to realise how popular Orleanism was in the last years of the Second Empire, when, the Napoleonic legend being no longer revived by military success, Orleanists and Republicans were regarded with growing favour as the champions of constitutional government who one day might overturn the existing regime. We have seen how after its fall the Republicans lost

¹ A testimony may be seen in France at the end of the century that Louis Philippe intended his grandson to retain the name of "Louis Philippe." The crown-pieces of the Monarchy of July, struck in 1838, the year of the birth of the Comte de Paris, are still in circulation, and the King is described upon them as Louis Philippe I., showing that when the first-born of the Duc (Ferdinand) d'Orléans was called Louis-Philippe, his parents and grandparents intended him to be known as Louis Philippe II.

their share of popularity, owing to Gambetta's efforts to continue the war, followed by the excesses of the Commune; and had the Comte de Paris not deliberately set to work to squander the inheritance, neither the intrigues of M. Thiers nor the rusty pretensions of the Legitimists would have hindered him from becoming King of the French. How long the Orleanist restoration would have lasted is another question.

Certain defenders of the Comte de Paris say that the line of conduct which he took was marked out for him by the fact that he was next in succession to the Comte de Chambord as legitimate King of France. An old Royalist who takes this view, if any one expresses a doubt on it, goes to his library shelf and with the *Almanach Royal* of 1788 confounds the doubter. There on the first yellowing page, after the Dauphin and "Madame," born of Louis, Sixteenth of the name, and of Marie-Antoinette-Josèphe-Jeanne, after "Monsieur" and the Comte d'Artois with his children, and after the sister and the aunts of the King, comes the Orleans branch with Louis-Philippe-Joseph (whose surname of *Égalité*¹ was not yet official) as First Prince of the Blood. Now the Royalist gentlemen who display this proof profess the doctrine of divine right. Yet all that their old calendar records is, that up to the Revolution, the succession to the Crown in the main line being well established, there was no reason for upsetting an arrangement made by Louis XIV., whereby the descendants of his younger grandson occupied the throne of Spain, and renounced their rights to that of France. But it is of the essence of divine right that it cannot be abrogated by human action; and to invest the dynastic transactions of

¹ "*Égalité*" was not a mere sobriquet of the Duc d'Orléans. When after the downfall of the Monarchy in 1792 he became a candidate of the "Mountain" for the Convention, he discovered that he had no surname, that of Orleans falling under the decree of the Constituent Assembly which abolished territorial appellations. He was therefore directed to proceed as though he were a foundling, and to apply to the municipality of his domicile to give him a name. The Commune of Paris assigned to him that of "*Égalité*," so as Louis-Philippe-Joseph *Égalité* he was elected deputy for Paris. The royal family of France had no family surname; and the Convention, in calling the King "Louis Capet," committed as great an inaccuracy as if the name of Plantagenet were applied to members of the House of Hanover.

Louis XIV. with that attribute is the very negation of the principle, making it depend on the capricious expression of personal will. Louis XIV. in his reign of seventy-two years had more reason than any other member of the human race to believe himself endowed with god-like qualities,¹ but their recognition after his death would have changed the whole basis of divine right. If he accepted, under the will of Charles II. of Spain, the Spanish crown for his grandson Philippe on condition that he renounced his French rights of succession, he likewise restored them to him by letters patent, and one transaction was as valid as the other. The fanatics of divine right un mutilated by Louis XIV., who call themselves Blancs d'Espagne, regarding Don Carlos as king under the title of Charles XI., have no more importance in France than in England have the Jacobites who speak of the Queen as the Duchess of Coburg; but on their own mildewed ground they seem to have more historical reason than the new Legitimists who aver that the divine succession devolved on Philippe VII. when Henri V. died in 1883. It would be needless to disturb the dust of this vain controversy but that the adoption by the Comte de Paris of the theory destroyed Orleanism, and thus possibly altered the history of France.

It is not to renunciations or other family arrangements made under Louis XIV. that the princes of the House of Orleans have owed their prestige in the nineteenth century. It is to the

¹ There was no subject on which Louis XIV. was more arbitrary and changeable than that of divine right. After making war on England to support it in the person of James II. he withdrew it from his discredited guest, when by the Treaty of Ryswick he recognised the right to the British throne of William of Orange, who incarnated the opposite principle; and almost his last act was by the Treaty of Utrecht to recognise in the same way the Hanoverian succession. In his own realm he perpetually made equally light of the doctrine, in addition to his contradictory policy regarding the renunciation of Philippe V. when he accepted the Spanish succession. In his last days, after losing one after another of his progeny, he placed in the legitimate succession of the Crown of France the bastards he had had by Mme. de Montespan—the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse. Louis XVIII. was ill-disposed to concede the rank of Royal Highness to the Duc d'Orléans, and while his wife, being daughter of the King of Naples, was received at Court with royal honours, the doors of the palace being thrown open *à deux battants* for her, they were half-closed again for Louis Philippe as he followed her in. He was only recognised as a Royal Highness at the same time as the Prince de Condé, by the favour of Charles X., whose throne he usurped five years later.

barricades of 1830, behind which Louis Philippe put on the crown of his dethroned cousin, that the sons of the citizen-monarch were indebted for the consideration which attaches to the children of a king.¹ Without the Monarchy of July the descendants of the Regent would have been ranked with the scores of Bourbons of Spain, of the two Sicilies or of Parma, whose unknown names fill unheeded pages of the *Almanach de Gotha*; and when the Comte de Chambord's death aroused the controversy of succession to a non-existent crown, the claims of the Orleans would have excited no more interest than those of the pretenders who style themselves respectively Dukes of Madrid and of Anjou.

In the declining days of the century three noble old men have been conspicuous figures in the French capital. The eldest of the royal brothers, the Duc de Nemours, was of striking likeness to his great ancestor Henri IV., as Rubens portrayed the Béarnais. The second, who has survived the others, the Prince de Joinville, less often seen in public by reason of infirmity, has becomingly occupied his retirement in writing a vivacious tribute to the brilliant reign of his father which the younger Orleans would ignore. But it is the third of these sons of Louis Philippe who was the worthiest incarnation of the Monarchy of July. The Duc d'Aumale to a stately presence joined graceful talents, making him in his old age the most interesting and picturesque of the sons of France. The nation's highest traditions of arms and of letters he signally dignified, from the day when his capture, as a valiant boy, of the Smala of Abd-el-Kader hastened the conquest of Algeria, to the autumn of his life when he endowed with the palace of the Condés the Institute he had long adorned. Of him Legitimists never dared to hint, as they did of one venerable

¹ cf. the terms of the will of the Duchess d'Orléans, dated Eisenach, January 1, 1855, in which she says: "They [her sons] should ever bear in mind the political principles which have made the glory of their house, which their grandfather faithfully observed upon the throne, and which their father, as his will bears witness, ardently adopted." The Comte de Paris was sixteen when his mother made this will, which was no doubt thus emphatically worded in consequence of the efforts, of which she strongly disapproved, made, after the death of Louis Philippe, for fusing the interests of the two exiled branches of the Bourbons.

brother, that he was disposed to deny his father's kinship, which gave him early scope to display his parts. It is vain to regret that the heir of Louis Philippe was not this gallant and gifted prince. Yet one may picture the destiny of France had the fortunes and honour of the Orleans family been in the hands of one who combined all the qualities which touch the sympathies of the conflicting elements of the nation. The man of culture would have appealed to the literary and artistic instinct widespread among the French people. The heir of the Revolution of July would have rallied the solid middle-class. The descendant of Henri of Navarre would have conciliated the Royalists. But the quality to have touched the hearts and imaginations of the people was that of the soldier, the dashing horseman of Horace Vernet's paintings, the graver warrior who directed the trial of Bazaine, confounding the excuses of the faithless marshal with a phrase that rang out like a trumpet-call to duty and patriotism, "Il restait la France."

It was because of the character of the Duc d'Aumale, and of the lustre he shed on the family of Orleans, that the alliance of the Comte de Paris with the Boulangists brought down upon that hapless prince censure sterner than is usually applied to mere ill-success. When the Republicans struck from the Army List the names of the Orleans Princes, General Boulanger was their minister to execute the decree, applying it to the Duc d'Aumale with ostentation unseemly in an officer who to his protection had owed early promotion. When therefore the hero invented of the Radicals became the leader and the hope of the Reactionaries, the Comte de Paris' alliance with him was condemned in terms that revived the saying, now passed into a proverb, that worse than a crime it was a blunder—words first applied to the outrage committed by Bonaparte to help him to a throne, when he entrapped and murdered a kinsman of the Orleans, the young Duc d'Enghien.¹ It was not merely

¹ March 20, 1804. "C'est pis qu'un crime, c'est une faute." These words are attributed by M. de Barante to Boulay (de la Meurthe), a moderate Republican of the Revolution, who subsequently aided Napoleon in the preparation of the Code.

disappointed Royalists who thus vented their wrath on their unsuccessful chief, nor Republicans happy to add discredit to the discomfited Monarchical cause. Foreigners censured his conduct with equal severity. An ambassador who arrived in Paris when the Boulangist movement was ended once spoke to me of "the baseness of the Comte de Paris" in connecting himself with it. The harshness of that expression in the lips of one not given to harsh language was perhaps explained by his friendship for the Duc d'Aumale ; but it was, I think, unjustifiable.

Had General Boulanger become dictator of France, and had he in that capacity put the Comte de Paris on the throne, the utilisation by that prince of the services of an adventurer (who in success would have lost that title) would not have been imputed to him as base or contemptible. On the contrary, the Comte de Paris' refusal of his aid, because of his former insolence to the House of Orleans, would have then exposed him to the scorn which inopportune quixotism provokes. Mild, indeed, was his disloyalty to family sentiment compared with that of Louis XVIII., whose first act, on regaining the throne, was to call to his intimate council Fouché, the regicide who had most fiercely demanded the head of his brother. In a land of revolution pretenders cannot be dainty in the choice of their instruments ; but to ward off criticism, success is essential to their venture. The crime and the blunder of the Comte de Paris were that he attached himself to an enterprise which failed ; and if his belief in its success proved him to be a prince of feeble judgment, unworthy of a ruler, he shared the unforeseeing fault not only with the majority of the people he would have governed, but with foreigners, who were the most competent to prognosticate. Had the ambassador, just now mentioned, been then in France, he, being a person of uncommon sagacity, might have predicted the failure of the Boulangist movement ; but he would have had only one colleague in Paris to support him, for it is said that of all the envoys accredited to the Republic one alone advised his Government in that sense.¹ The signs which deceived calm

¹ The one ambassador to the Republic who confidently predicted to his

diplomats, studying the agitation under their eyes, might well delude an ill-fated exile, offspring and victim of revolutions, persuading him that one was at hand to divert his destiny.

It was a curious fate for this ill-starred pretender, that whether he deemed himself the heir of the ancient Monarchy or of the parliamentary throne of Louis Philippe, his last struggle for success should have been in a plebiscitary adventure conducted by an aspirant to military dictatorship. The misfortune of the Comte de Paris was that the vicissitudes of his life perpetually kept him in spheres of action inappropriate to his character and disposition. He had none of the qualities essential for a crowned ruler of France after a century of revolution ; but his domestic virtues, his hereditary Teutonic temperament, his interest in social questions, and his love of rural pursuits, would have made him an admirable King of England. In all the histories of the grandeur and decadence of royal houses few experiences have been more pathetic than that of this unhappy prince. His parts would have adorned the most exalted station in a land where the crown is transmitted in peaceful succession ; yet he was fated to waste his life in exile and in intrigue, in transactions and in manifestoes which, abhorrent to his own nature, repelled those most in sympathy with it. Thus this pattern of paternal duty in private life was to the public the unfilial flouter of his father's will ; the studious man of books became the confederate of a soldier of fortune ; and the heir of constitutional Monarchy, who

Government the failure of the Boulangist adventure, gave a cynical explanation of his foresight. It was his habit, he said, to use a Parisian club of which the French members were all Reactionaries, because he found their conversation useful to him in composing his despatches, as, in order to warn his Government of what was likely to happen in France, he had only to write in the opposite sense the opinions and forecasts on public affairs expressed at that resort. At the height of the agitation he was tempted to foretell its ultimate success when the Boulangists, after winning provincial elections, triumphantly carried one in Paris ; but on returning to the club and finding the members confident that the end of the Republic was near he resisted outside signs, and adhering to his rule, advised his Imperial master that the movement would inevitably fail. The story, with its evident exaggeration, is significant of the impatient contempt felt by the representatives of the Continental Empires towards the French Reactionaries, to whose lack of intelligence they attribute the continuance in France of a form of government which their august sovereigns would prefer to see removed from Europe.

young was the victim of plebiscitary despotism, died worn out with abortive efforts to make a *coup d'état*.

II

The sentiment called forth by the name and figure of the Comte de Paris' son is not that of pathos. The Duc d'Orléans seems to have inherited none of his father's qualities save his incapacity to touch the imagination of the people of France. When, breaking the law of exile, he appeared one day in Paris, and demanded as a French citizen to perform his military service, the public remained unmoved, either when he was sent to prison, or when pardoned he was conducted to the frontier.¹ Since then, when Republican scandals might have wrecked the Republic, had any alternative form of government seemed practicable, the existence of a young pretender in the flower of his age has inspired neither hope nor alarm. This amiable prince, having failed in a well-conceived adventure, has cultivated a talent for travesty. The Comte de Paris only half-heartedly repudiated his father's last wishes. If in memory of his submission at Frohsdorf he ordered centenary masses for the repose of Louis XVI., he, four months earlier, celebrated the anniversary of Valmy, where Louis Philippe as a boy had helped to consummate the dethronement of that King. But unheeding the dying injunction of the last Duc d'Orléans to his progeny to be "passionate servants of the Revolution," his namesake, in the intervals of his modern diversions, mimics the ancient Monarchy. On the betrothal of a prince of Savoy with his sister, a princess whose beauty and romantic story inspired universal sympathy, the Duc d'Orléans announced it to the Dukes of France in antique phrase, addressing each as his "dear cousin," and praying God to guard him in his holy and worthy keeping.² The

¹ February-June 1890.

² "Et sur ce, je prie Dieu, qu'Il vous ait, mon cousin, en Sa sancte et digne garde. Philippe, Stowe House, 26 Mars 1895." It was the same formula which Prince François de Bourbon had used recently in writing to the Duc d'Orléans to rebuke him for using the arms of France without the adjunct which heraldry prescribes for younger branches. There are, however, revolutionary precedents

document gratified several respectable persons, who sometimes perplex coachmen by bidding them drive to the "Place Louis XV.," when they wish to be taken to the historical site now known as the Place de la Concorde; it likewise affronted other Legitimists not honoured with it, who considered their nobility purer than that of some of the bearers of ducal titles. But a pretender capable of conceiving that the union of the grandson of Victor Emmanuel, who chased the Bourbons out of Italy, with the great-grandchild of Louis Philippe, who drove the elder Bourbons from France, was an appropriate occasion for playing at reviving the ducal order with the courtly formulas of Louis XIV., the ancestor of those dispossessed princes, is wanting in that quality which the French call *esprit*, and which they will certainly look for in the ruler of their choice, when the day comes for them to submit to one.

It might be said that the Duc d'Orléans masquerading in the trappings of the Grand Monarque, has not brought greater ridicule on his name than did Louis Bonaparte on his when he descended on Boulogne with his tame eagle, likewise the symbol of a great monarch; and that he, notwithstanding the laughter of Europe excited by it, was the absolute ruler of the nation a dozen years later. But there is this difference between the acts of the two pretenders. The forlorn bird of Boulogne was the emblem of the democratic glories of France, still fresh in the memories of veterans who had imbued with them the young generation, born amid the echoes of the cannon of the Empire. Thus two months after the incarceration of Louis Bonaparte for his escapade, the arrival of the Emperor's ashes from St. Helena¹ provoked a recrudescence of the Napoleonic legend, which bore the prisoner of Ham first to the Élysée and then to the Tuileries.

for its use. Napoleon, when he disgraced Fouché, in a letter dated July 1, 1810, beginning "Monsieur le Duc d'Otrante, vos services ne peuvent plus m'être agréables," ended with a modernised version of it. Louis Napoleon also, but not before he attained the throne, had a fondness for epistolary formulas of the old Monarchy, which he made of evil omen, as the last missive ever penned by him as Emperor of the French followed one of these ancient models, when at Sedan he announced his surrender to the King of Prussia.

¹ August-October-December 1840.

Whereas the spectacle of an Orleans playing at a king of the old Monarchy suggests nothing pleasing to the popular fancy. Not that it evokes the rebuilding of the Bastille, or the revival of privilege; but it has a sham air of the Restoration, a regime which, though needful for the recuperation of France, rests condemned in public memory as one begun under foreign, and ended under ecclesiastical domination.

No doubt the Comte de Paris made the part of pretender a difficult heritage for his son to hold, and the most sagacious adherent of Monarchy would be at a loss to advise him what to do to advance the cause. It may be that, convinced that he will never bear the burden of a real crown, he likes in a mock court to revive ceremonial as obsolete as the touching of children for king's evil,¹ and as little calculated to win the sympathy of a modern democracy. If he had serious designs the young prince would strive to belie the impolite sarcasms of Republicans, who deride the choice of his counsellors from France as better qualified to advise him on the tendencies of English tailors than of French electors. It is not believed that subtle plots are concealed under the announcement that a button engraved with the arms of France has been designed for the coats of his courtiers, who do duty in the *Œil-de-Bœuf* of an inn at Brussels or at Folkestone with greater elegance than the retainers of the exiled kings whom Candide met in the hostelry at Venice. It is less disturbing for France that the retinue of the Duc d'Orléans is not composed of desperate persons who aspire to be held up to infamy by a new Victor Hugo, like M. Fialin Persigny who attended Louis Bonaparte to Boulogne, or like

Morny, Maupas le Grec, St. Arnaud le Chacal.²

A frequent fate of pretenders is that they have to take as associates the unprincipled or the insignificant. The Duc d'Orléans ought not to emphasise the latter disability as, apart

¹ One of the acts conducing to the unpopularity of Charles X. was his revival of this ceremony at the Hospital of St. Marcoul at Reims on May 31, 1825, after his coronation.

² *Les Châtiments*, li. 5

from dim dynastic projects, he is the head of a family famed for the intellectual gifts of its members, which hitherto they have signally cultivated amid every sort of vicissitude.

III

In contrast to members of the decorative society of the capital are the Royalists of less brilliant aspect, but of more interesting character, also seen at the receptions held by the pretender on a foreign shore. These are the country gentlemen, whose clothes of French provincial cut, scanned with pity by the Parisian exponents of London fashions, proclaim the *hobereaux*,¹ who in their distant châteaux preserve a faith in the kingly principle, of an ardour and sincerity found in no other political creed in their native land. It has been said that in France profession rather than birth makes the most marked distinction between men.² The observant functionary who noted the fact had specially in his mind the disappearance of local characteristic; but the remark is equally true applied to the social origin of Frenchmen. Of these two sections of French Royalists, the men of fashion are usually idlers by profession; and the pursuit of the pleasures of the boulevard, or their efforts to imitate English sporting habits, have produced a type which is perhaps the most unsatisfactory result of modern French civilisation. Consequently whether they are the bearers of titles ancient or modern, authentic or dubious, whether descended from courtiers of Versailles or from shopkeepers of Paris, from soldiers of the Empire or from lawyers of the Revolution, they are all of identical pattern, physically, morally, and intellectually.

In the same way the Royalist rural gentry resemble one another. Here is one of oldest descent whose parchments in his remote château in Poitou record that the King invited his

¹ *Hobereau* is a word for which we have no equivalent in English: in the eighteenth century it denoted the *petits seigneurs* who never went to Court, and to-day it is applied to the rural gentry who do not frequent the capital.

² *La France Provinciale* par René Millet: (subsequently Minister of France in Sweden and Resident at Tunis).

ancestor to mount in the royal carriage one day at Marly ten years before ducal rank was conferred on the family of a Parisian gentleman-in-waiting. The latter looks of a different race to the provincial noble; though he has no attribute, exterior or mental, to distinguish him from another courtier from the boulevards, whose father made a fortune in trade under the second Empire. The well-born Poitevin agriculturist, however, has his characteristics reproduced in his neighbour from the Berry, whose name of noble sonority hides the patronymic of a notary who slipped into possession of his patron's lands at the emigration. It is to be remarked that the mere fact of a French country gentleman bearing unostentatiously a high-sounding title in an old-fashioned manor, where he lives with peasant-like simplicity, is not of necessity proof that he is a son of the Crusaders, or is even of eighteenth-century nobility. There is many a weather-beaten château wherein the combination of rustic discomfort and faded good-breeding gives the impression that the masters are relics of an ancient caste, fallen into decay in a democratic age. Yet on inquiry it will be found, sometimes even in regions of aristocratic tradition, that these mouldering guardians of the prejudices of the Old Regime are of Revolutionary origin. They are descendants perhaps of a regicide of the Convention, or perhaps of an obscurer provincial Jacobin, who got his share of confiscated lands for the aid he gave to Carrier in drowning the Royalists yonder at Nantes, or for his services on the infernal column of Westermann, which scoured the loyal Vendée with rapine.

The curious feature of these *hobereaux* who disguise their origin under territorial names or irregular titles is the sincerity of their Royalist professions. They cannot be compared to our newly-made peers, who prevail on editors of peerages to erase from their pedigrees the worthy aldermen who founded their fortunes, and to accord them forefathers who performed feats at Hastings unknown to the workers of the Bayeux tapestry; for these invent a romantic ancestry in the pretentious hope of enhancing their public importance. Such motives can little affect

these modest nobles of the Revolution. Even if the title or name secure better dowered marriages for their sons, within the provincial horizon in which they move and wish to be well considered, their history is well known to their neighbours of longer genealogy. Some of them, it is certain, have an unfeigned horror of their landed origin; and their dogged royalism, which often is a material disadvantage under the Republic, is in a measure an expiatory sacrifice for their tainted heritage of 1793.¹

Other loyal gentlemen there are, though dissimilar to the ornate Parisians whom they meet in the train of the pretender, whose lineage is veritably ancient, and who pass their home life in an atmosphere of refinement which retains a perfume of old France chastened with the tribulations of a century. Here is one of those rare châteaux in which life has gone on without interruption from before the Revolution; for though remote from the Court, where the head of the family had a high place, it was never entirely deserted for Versailles, and at the second Emigration the devotion of a retainer saved it from confiscation. Since the Restoration the women of the house have handed down the tradition of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, witnesses of the austere life of her who, like some of themselves, had grown prematurely old in ill-timed girlhood under the shadow of the guillotine; inheriting, too, the masculinity of that illustrious princess, and provoking an echo applied to themselves of Napoleon's description of her, that she was the only man of her family. A Puritan seriousness marks the daily round in this Catholic château, and in the spacious old hôtel of the provincial capital during the winter months; for the family have abandoned Paris since the death before Metz of the only son. Although the master of the house has accepted the Orleans succession, there are few traces of that branch of the Bourbons to be seen within these walls

¹ In a Revolutionary family of this description which came under my notice, the inhabitants of the château, which their ancestor had got possession of as "*biens nationaux*," were a mother and daughter, both aged women. The origin of their property was to them a perpetual penance, and they spent their lives in works of expiation. They built a costly church in their village, and their château was devoted to the uses of the bishop of the diocese, who made it his summer residence.

which shelter many royal relics. Enshrined in the chapel is the Book of Hours of Marie Antoinette. Among engravings of eighteenth-century portraits after Rigaud and Vanloo is a later print representing the birth of the Child of Miracle in 1820; and with the family pictures is the painting of a boy in brilliant uniform, one of the infant grenadiers commanded by the young Duc de Bordeaux, when his grandfather Charles X. occupied the throne till his cousin of Orleans displaced him. But the signed photographs of Philippe Comte de Paris and of his heir have not the conspicuous place here which they occupy in the salons of fashionable Reactionaries at Paris.

There is an aged lady who, despite her quality of dowager, still reigns in this household, and the sorest grief of her life, greater than the death of her soldier grandson at Gravelotte, for that was full of honour, was his father's resolve to acknowledge the Orleans branch. When he travels abroad to pay his respects to the pretender she affects to believe him gone to see his notary; and the *Gazette de France*, which records the pilgrimage, she has refused to read ever since that venerable Legitimist organ became Orleanist. When the Duchesse de Berry was being hunted like a partridge on the hills by the agents of Louis Philippe, she was growing up in the Faubourg St. Germain, now only a geographical expression, but then the sanctuary of aristocratic exclusiveness, whereof few traces remain in any section of Parisian society. There she learned to hate Orleanism as the blackest phase of the Revolution, and took a husband older than herself whose first infant memory was his father's farewell embrace as he went to be beheaded. To justify her vehemence towards the Orleans family she preserves a manuscript book, her mother's journal at Coblenz, of the year 1793. In it the childish round hand, amid notes of lessons and of nursery pastime, records, with precocious pathos, the news of horrors which the émigrés received circuitously from France, beginning with the execution of the King and ending with reflections on the death, on the same scaffold, of the basest of his judges, Philippe Égalité.

Less pleasing than these dignified and blameless examples of

a disappearing class, is another type of provincial Royalists. The "petite noblesse de province," when not of more modern origin, is chiefly sprung from magistrates and merchants,¹ who in the last century obtained patents of nobility conferring fiscal privileges, without ever going to Court. Instead of resuming their place in the bourgeoisie they have, since the Revolution abolished nobility, multiplied beyond the dreams of the monarchs who first elevated their ancestors. Uncontrolled by any authority, they use what titles they please without restriction; the younger children of counts and barons whose original creation, when authentic, was limited to primogeniture, calling themselves and all their son's sons counts and barons in perpetuity. For generations a large proportion of this class has in its "gentilhommières" lived the life of small farmers or graziers, while bringing up its sons with the idea that their condition forbade them to earn their living honourably, even in the liberal professions. The French testamentary law, which compels parents to divide their property among their children, with its corollary the system of dowry universal in the nation, makes remote the prospect of actual indigence for the members of this class who refuse to work; but their means as a rule are slender. Thus from their material condition, from their lack of cultivation, and indeed from their descent (their nobility, when genuine, being usually attenuated), they really belong to an inferior grade in the social category. But, disdaining the occupations proper to their station, they lead lives of aimless, when not dissipated, idleness; and in the country towns of their resort they model their morals and demeanour on the pattern of the fashionable Reactionaries of the capital. Thus they bring dis-

¹ In addition to "noblesse d'épée" and "noblesse de robe" (conferred by judicial office), there were under the Ancient Regime "noblesse d'échevinage," conferred on sheriffs and civic officials, and "noblesse de finance," which was the general name given to titles purchased by rich roturiers. Before the Revolution there were probably at least 100,000 of these privileged persons in France, but many of them had become so poor that in way of life they could scarcely be distinguished from the peasantry. Such was M. de Corday d'Armont, the father of Charlotte Corday. The modern bearers of titles who swarm in the land are also descended from the unprivileged nobility created wholesale by Napoleon I. and, to a less extent, under the Restoration. There are, moreover, vast numbers of titled persons in France whose nobility is entirely of home manufacture.

credit on the rank they affect, on the Church which has educated them, and on the Monarchical cause which they loudly patronise. In the few regions of France where the Royalist sentiment is ingrained in the hearts of the people, the pitiful existence and character of many of the men of this class are recognised and deplored. In the Vendée, where the Republic has never been loved, members of the clergy and of the hard-working bourgeoisie, of Royalist faith, have assured me that the unsatisfactory example of these "hobereaux" is an important cause of the loss of the department as a Monarchical stronghold.¹

IV

The foregoing glimpses of provincial types display the quality of the Monarchical cause in the country. Contemplating it together with the figure of the pretender and the record of political incapacity of the Reactionaries, incidentally noted on former pages, we understand why the Republic may deride the prospect of a Restoration, even at times when political scandal or anarchy disposes the nation to desire another form of government. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the proceedings of the Socialists might, as in the middle of the century, so alarm the prudent classes of the towns and the rural populations as to impel France to seek a strong system of government to check anarchy and to establish confidence. Under such circumstances what prospect is there of the nation turning to the Duc d'Orléans, as it did to Louis Napoleon after the alarms of 1848? The name of Bonaparte at that period was the symbol of military glory, of order, and of the Revolution; and though the Napoleonic dynasty has disappeared, those three traditions are as potent as ever to inspire the sympathies of the nation.

The Duc d'Aumale, as we have seen, personified them; so it is not because his grand-nephew is a member of the House of

¹ In 1885 the deputation of the Vendée was entirely Royalist: in 1889 it returned one Republican and five Reactionaries, and in 1893 four Republicans and two Royalists. In 1898 the Reactionaries won back a seat, but the total polls of the department showed a decided Republican majority in the electorate.

Orléans that that young prince is not deemed to possess them. The Revolutionary tradition he inherited as his birthright, but having joined with his father in cutting off the entail that patrimony is dissipated ; and though his kinsmen have been gallant soldiers, his own name has no association with the glamour or the authority of the army. If the Duc d'Orléans attained the throne it would be as a constitutional king ; for, in spite of his repudiation of the name of Louis Philippe and of his antique travesties, he would have to accept a charter with a better grace than did Charles X., and on the wider basis of universal suffrage. The practical effect of such a change would be the perpetuation of the parliamentary system in the hands either of inexperienced Reactionaries, or of more expert Republicans rallied to the monarchy. Thus all the ills disparaging the Republic would be repeated with the addition, at the top of the new fabric, of a Court ; and in it the monarch would have to create innumerable ceremonial posts for persons of the class which, with the politicians, is, at the close of the century, the least creditable element of French society. Aristocratic from the point of view neither of heraldry nor of philology, it would have all the unpopular attributes of an aristocracy. For its brief duration it would be the apotheosis of the cosmopolitan plutocracy which has overwhelmed the once brilliant society of Paris, where it first found a footing under the untoward auspices of the Court of the Second Empire, of which this revival would be a deteriorated copy without the support of a military autocracy.

A Court may be of active benefit to a people even in a modern democratic State. The character and tastes of the sovereign may make the palace the centre of the highest life of the nation, adding a lustre to lofty pursuits, which otherwise are deemed respectable rather than brilliant, and elevating the view of the whole community. Thus the death of the Prince Consort, was, as we have observed, the most important national event in the last half of the century ; for by practically depriving England of a Court it withdrew the only influence capable of checking the aggressive march of plutocracy which has transformed the character of English society. But the Queen was able to

impose her high standard on the Court, and to see it reflected on the nation, only by reason of the stable authority of her office in the eyes of her subjects, as expressed in a watchword of those days, "Our young Queen and our old Constitution."

The whole achievement of the united Monarchical party, no longer rent asunder by Legitimist and Orleanist factions, or rivalled by Bonapartists, has been to identify itself with the triflers of the capital who are destitute of influence, and with the recluses and rural sportsmen of the châteaux, of ill-tradition in the eyes of the peasantry. It is therefore, not surprising that it has driven out of its ranks the electorate of France. At the elections in 1885, when the deaths of Gambetta and of the Comte de Chambord had removed the only popular figure in the Republic and the most unpopular obstacle of the Monarchy, the country showed that if skilfully guided it would be willing to try a change of regime. Of the votes polled 45 per cent were given to the Reactionaries, and if they had obtained one-half of the abstentions the Republic would have come to an end. In eight years the Comte de Paris and his followers had exterminated the Monarchical sentiment in the nation. Scandal after scandal had meanwhile discredited the government of the Republic. Yet in 1893, on the morrow of the Panama affair, the electorate, of two evils, preferred the doubtful probity of the Republicans to the certain incapacity of the Royalists; so the Reactionaries obtained only 16 per cent of the votes recorded, and if every, elector who abstained from the poll had voted for them, even then they would have been in a hopeless minority. In 1885 thirty departments declared for the Monarchy. In 1893 two in Brittany and one in Normandy alone returned a bare majority of Royalist deputies. In 1898 not a single department of France returned a Reactionary majority and the Monarchists of all shades polled only 12 per cent of the votes recorded at the general elections.

It would be waste of time to examine the Monarchical organisations in the country, which organise nothing but defeat, such as the societies of middle-aged gentlemen which, under the

volatile name of "Jeunesse Royaliste," celebrate the feast of St. Philippe with banquets and speeches. It is equally useless to dwell upon the proceedings of the shrunk Monarchical minority in the Chamber. Excepting the speeches of the late Mgr. d'Hulst, a learned ecclesiastic, whose frigid oratory was better suited for the lecture-room than for the pulpit or the tribune, it is not easy to find a single utterance of weight or of interest made by a Royalist deputy in the Chamber since the centenary of the abolition of the old Monarchy, as though there were a fatality in dates. Far different was the attitude of the minority in the Corps Législatif under the Second Empire. Till the year before the War, at its strongest it never attained half the number to which the Reactionary Opposition in the Chamber of Deputies has fallen at its weakest. Even then the Monarchists remained fourteen times as numerous as the famous "Cinq" who terrorised the Imperial Government, which prohibited the publication of their speeches, and who attracted the attention of Europe. Under the Third Republic, where every word uttered in Parliament is officially printed and circulated, to cheer with incoherent violence the mutual attacks of Republican groups seems to be the most active vocation of the Monarchical remnant in the Chamber. To one who has watched the painful spectacle of would-be champions of the throne and the altar boisterously applauding the disciples of the Commune, it is clear why the prospects of the restoration of a parliamentary Monarchy are remote.

CHAPTER III

THE PLEBISCITARY ELEMENT

I

IF the restoration of a parliamentary Monarchy be improbable, it does not follow that the Republic is established in perpetuity. There is an element in the nation whereof the importance cannot be gauged by the character of the shadowy parties or groups which in quiet times presume to represent it. The Bonapartist, Revisionist, and other plebiscitary organisations are insignificant coteries directed by insignificant people. The principle they obscurely advocate is a sentiment latent in the French nation, which is brought to the surface not by the intrigues or the arguments of propaganda, but by periodic currents of popular feeling. Such a tide, when it sets in, may carry some individual to the throne of France. It may be an Orleans; it may be a Bonaparte; but whoever it be, he will be placed on the perilous eminence not as a member of this or that dynasty. He will attain it because his figure and his personal character, real or supposed, have touched the imagination of the people of France, or because he is the nominee of the hero of the hour, who prefers to delegate the supreme power. Had the Comte de Paris been brought back as King by General Boulanger, it would not have been as a rightful heir restored to the throne by a Monk, as was suggested at the time. He would not have returned as the successor either of Charles X. or of

Louis Philippe. He would have assumed the Crown because a soldier of fortune, finding the kingly office inexpedient for himself, chose him as its titular, as he might have chosen Prince Napoleon, or, indeed, some personage destitute of dynastic pretension.

The contrast between the situation of the plebiscitary cause and that of the Royalists is remarkable. The Royalists form a conspicuous section of the population, both in the gay society of the capital and in the secluded châteaux of the provinces. But prominent without importance, and wealthy without influence, it is improbable that they will ever bring back to France, as a constitutional monarch, the pretender of their hopes. The plebiscitary doctrine, on the contrary, can scarcely be said to be professed by a party; yet one day it may be put into practice by a majority of the nation.

As for Bonapartists, strictly so termed, they sparsely survive, scattered through the land. There are veterans of Sebastopol who still cut their grey beards after the Imperial pattern, which was not yet so called when young captains, at the bidding of the Prince President, they fired the cannon on the people of Paris, as they will sometimes boast in a whisper. There are beauties of the Tuileries who, growing old, look back with loyal regret to the epoch of their triumph when the name of Metternich suggested diversion rather than diplomacy, in the interlude, fatal for Austria and for France, between Solferino and Sadowa. There are bearers of the names of more famous battle-fields of the First Empire, or of Italian provinces which they have never seen, whose houses and lands, confiscations of the Revolution, they owe to the patronage of Napoleon, though all of these cannot be counted as Bonapartists. Some of them without the excuse that peaceful heirs of warlike names have for accepting the established government, have for reasons of fashion become adherents of the Orleanist pretender.

In the country the Napoleonic legend is said to linger among the peasantry, whose fathers gave their votes for Louis Bonaparte against General Cavaignac, believing it was the great Emperor

who had come back.¹ It was in the rural electorate that lay the strength of the Second Empire; and the peasant still preserves a vague recollection or tradition of the reign of Napoleon III. as a period of prosperity, having some connection with the Revolution, which in a dim former time put down the seignorial privileges of the châteaux. But the sentiment no longer finds expression at the ballot-box, and of the few anti-Republican politicians who are returned to the Chamber not one in ten proclaims himself a Bonapartist. In the department where Napoleon last set his foot on French soil, before the *Bellerophon* bore him to captivity, which had remained an Imperialist stronghold during many crises of the Republic, I witnessed the general elections of 1893, when the Reactionaries were swept clean out of its representation, not even setting up a candidate in five of its seven constituencies. Old peasants would prattle with indistinct regret about the Emperor. But the younger men, who complained that times were harder than when their fathers married, admitted that the phylloxera was more manifestly the cause of their changed fortunes than the Republic; and in no part of France was the indifference of the electorate more profound than in this Bonapartist region.

This was remarkable, because a literary and dramatic revival of the Napoleonic legend was then at its height in the capital. The enthusiasm of writers, of artists, and of the Parisian public for all that concerned the Emperor and the glories of the Empire was so keen that it deserves attention. During the first twenty years of the Republic the chief safeguard against the revival of the Napoleonic legend was the recollection of the Second Empire, and the smoke of the conflagration which overwhelmed it clouded the name of Bonaparte. The death of the Prince Imperial

¹ In the same way, when the chances of the Comte de Paris seemed serious, the peasant with less enthusiasm used to say, "C'est Louis Philippe qui revient." In the Haute Savoie I was told in 1894 that there were mountain villagers who believed that Napoleon III. was still Emperor. As to the Bonapartism of the peasantry a Conservative deputy of the Aveyron, who supported the Comte de Paris, told me that the majority of his rural electors were Bonapartists, and in the Landes the owner of a large estate, whose father was the local agent of the Comte de Chambord, but who himself had rallied to the Republic, informed me to the same effect. In both these departments the great majority of the electorate now vote for Republican candidates.

discouraged its partisans in the street and at the polls; while in the study the disparaging narrative of Lanfrey and the pitiless dissection of Taine continued the work of iconoclasm. But the Boulangist movement revealed that Cæsarism was ever latent in the French nature; while its failure proclaimed that Cæsar had not yet appeared. So when the Panama scandal displayed the turpitude and impunity of politicians, military adventure being discredited as a remedy for parliamentary ills, the public of the capital consoled itself with a literary *coup d'état*.

It was the centenary year of the manifestation of the genius of the Jacobin officer whose artillery at the siege of Toulon commenced to turn the sordid bloodshed of the Revolution into the more imposing slaughter of the Empire. Napoleon caused a hundredfold more sorrow and suffering to the French than did Robespierre and the Terrorists, whose patronage initiated his career of carnage. Yet while their memory is held in merited execration, the tradition of his achievements has given more satisfaction to the descendants of his French victims than all the subsequent inventions of civilisation for the increase of human well-being. The nation may be better off under the Third Republic than under the First Empire; but material prosperity, though becoming the ideal of modern communities, does not yet suffice to satisfy the sentiment of a people possessing a valiant and romantic past. The Panama scandal was a typical outcome of the materialism of the age, which in different societies takes different morbid forms. In France the outbreak of the malady among politicians was favoured by the peculiar debility of the parliamentary constitution. Thus when the middle-class anarchy, calling itself popular government, was bringing discredit on the nation, the image was evoked of the master whose first title to civic respect was the expulsion by his grenadiers of the ill-famed representatives of the people, in spite of the claim to be inviolable of Deputy Bigonnet and other patriots of importance in 1799.¹

¹ Jean Bigonnet was the member of the Cinq Cents who, when General Bonaparte appeared at the door of the Orangerie at St. Cloud, where they had just assembled on the 19 Brumaire, seized him by the arm, exclaiming, "Que faites-vous, téméraire? vous violez la sanctuaire des lois."—Mignet, *Hist. de la Révolu-*

The memory was revived of the single genius which, evolving order out of the chaos of the Revolution, constituted the firm fabric whereon French society still rests. Moreover, the meanness of the vices, revealed in parliamentary circles, which had been practised to enhance the domestic comfort or the irregular luxury of mediocre politicians, was in contrast to the legend of public splendour of the Empire won by hardship, self-denial, and valour. Thus the memoirs of a lieutenant of the Emperor¹ relating with Gascon exuberance the glorious rigours of the camp and the battle-field, touched a chord of popular sentiment which echoes the belief of philosophers as well as of warriors, that as civilisation progresses, war, with all its nameless horrors, becomes essential for society to save it from falling into materialism.²

The enthusiasm for all that concerned the Emperor of that considerable section of the French population which is affected by literature, art, and the drama, might have had manifold consequences if a political crisis had supervened, bringing to the front a hero with martial figure or a name to touch popular fancy. But it was an epoch of disillusion and lassitude after the Boulangist adventure and the scandal of Panama. So the cult of Napoleon was established for a season as a consoling moral exercise rather than as a political manifestation: just as sceptical Parisians, who rarely enter any other church, find comfort in kneeling at the shrine of Our Lady of Victories in times of peace, when there is no pressing need to invoke the mediatrix of the God of Battles. Though this glory-craving sentiment is innate in most Frenchmen, the majority of the nation has neither the leisure nor the culture to quicken it with mental stimulant. So

tion, c. xiii. His name reappears in the Hundred Days when he was nominated Mayor of Macon by Napoleon, who at that moment was compelled to accept the services of enemies much more celebrated.

¹ General Marbot.

² "Permanent peace is a dream, not even a beautiful one, and war is a law of God's order in the world, by which the noblest virtues of man, courage and self-denial, loyalty and self-sacrifice, are developed. Without war the world would deteriorate into materialism."—*F.-M. Count Helmuth von Moltke as a correspondent*, translated by Mary Herms. This extract from a letter written by the field-marshal to Professor Bluntschli is almost a quotation, probably unconscious, of a passage of Kant.

the peasant who never heard of the Memoirs of Marbot, or the plays of Sardou, or the pictures of Raffet, went to the polls that year, or abstained from voting, unaware that a wave of intellectual Bonapartism had passed over his lettered compatriots. The latter also were equally unaffected in their exercise of the suffrage, for the good reason that there were neither candidates nor questions before the electorate having any connection with the revived passion.

Every precaution has been taken by the guardians of the Republic to remove plebiscitary temptation from the reach of their countrymen. We have seen how Gambetta's electoral system of *scrutin-de-liste* was repressed till he died, for fear it might be used for a plebiscite in his favour, and how then it was only tried to be discarded in a panic, which the plebiscitary apparition of General Boulanger roused. Similarly, whenever any manifestation has been made in favour of the procedure called referendum, the Republican authorities have hastened to check it with all the Napoleonic powers with which the central Government is invested to restrain local demonstrations. In 1889 several provincial municipal councils, before executing certain projects which entailed expense on their communes, had submitted them to the decision of the whole body of electors. To this end they distributed voting papers marked "Yes" and "No," accompanied with explanations of the questions at issue. Boulangism was rife; and though these proceedings seem all to have been initiated for purely local purposes, the Government of the Republic, fearing the plebiscitary tendencies of the people, put a stop to them. M. Constans, the Minister of the Interior, who had been called to office to kill Boulangism, and whose qualities would have made him an admirable instrument of despotism, wrote a circular to the Préfets. It was a most instructive exposition of French Republican ideas on the liberty of the subject, on local independence, and on the scope of universal suffrage.¹ From beginning

¹ Despatched March 23, 1889, but not made public till the following month, after the flight of General Boulanger. Some years later (November 1892) the Municipal Council of Paris proposed that a question involving the price of gas in

to end its arrogant tone is that of the official ukases of the Second Empire. Citizens, he declares, have no right to meddle directly in the management of public interests confided to their mandatories, who, if they require advice, get it, unasked sometimes, from the "competent authorities." Moreover, a local body in convoking the electors encroached on the privilege exclusively reserved to the Préfet of the department, or to the President of the Republic, and entailed on citizens useless waste of time. It was pleaded that the crisis called for dictatorial measures to save the people from the abyss of dictatorship. That is to say, the parliamentary Republic used the Napoleonic machinery to carry out the Napoleonic principle that the people of France must never be trusted to work out its own destiny.

The end of these precautions is to make impossible at normal times a plebiscitary manifestation, which could only be effective with the administrative machinery in sympathetic hands to direct the elections or to provoke a popular vote by irregular means. It was for this that the Republicans who revised the Constitution in 1884,¹ recalling the history of 1851, made ineligible for the Presidency members of families which have reigned in France. Thus the way is closed for any prince, even not a pretender, who, like the son of the Duc de Chartres, might serve as a figure-head for the commonwealth. Prince Henri d'Orleans has made no sign that he wishes to rival the pretensions of his cousin. Yet the fact that a member of a family, prone, from the days of the Regency, to intrigue against the elder branch, has cultivated, before the eyes of the public, pursuits more arduous than those

the capital should be decided by *referendum*, and the Préfet of the Seine, who attends the meetings of the Council as the agent of the Central Government, said it might vote the resolution if it pleased, but by the terms of this circular the vote, being illegal, would have no effect. The Préfet, M. Poubelle, afterwards French Ambassador at the Vatican, treated the question with summary disdain: "J'ai cherché dans le dictionnaire administratif la signification du mot et j'ai lu 'referendum, mot Suisse.' On veut bien me rappeler qu'avant d'être Suisse ce mot était Latin—de la basse Latinité. Or les mots Latins n'ont pas beaucoup de succès en France. Le mot 'véto' n'a jamais été compris. Eh bien! mariez ensemble Mme. Véto et M. Referendum et renvoyez-les dos à dos." Notwithstanding this provocative reference to Marie Antoinette, the Radical Council passed its resolution, but, as the Préfet had warned it, it had no effect.

¹ L. C. 13-14 Août 1884, A. 2.

followed by the pretender of his house, has caused him vaguely to be regarded as a young man for whom the next century may reserve an important destiny.

II

There are two brothers struck by the same incapacity, who bear a name apter to rally the voices of the people of France. Their father, the son of Jerome Bonaparte, some time King of Westphalia, was born after the death, at St. Helena, of his uncle. But though Prince Napoleon wore the features of the great Emperor, was intelligent, and under the Second Empire was not unpopular, owing to his opposition to the rule of his cousin, he lacked qualities essential to support the burden of his name. Consequently after the death of the Prince Imperial he was never a serious pretender. Of his sons the value, mental, moral, and physical, is little known in France. The elder, by primogeniture and by the law of the Republic which has exiled him, is held to be the heir of the Empire ; so in that character from time to time he issues a manifesto, as he is bound to do. It has no effect ; but on the other hand Prince Victor has not committed publicly any acts to prejudice his chances should they ever arrive. The younger brother, Prince Louis, is an officer in the service of Russia, and that, in view of the relations of France with that country, may peradventure be a significant appointment. It is possible that should the Franco-Russian alliance lead to the end hoped for by every Frenchman who has applauded it, France would accept from the Tsar whatever ruler he pleased to offer her, provided he endowed his nominee with Alsace-Lorraine for an appanage. Short of that eventuality, if a member of the house of Bonaparte signally distinguished himself in the front rank of an army fighting side by side with the troops of France, they might in case of victory acclaim a name which echoed the tradition of a hundred years before.

The centenary is at hand of the battles of the Napoleonic epic. It may be that amid undisturbed peace the dates will be

recalled as historical anniversaries and nothing more. Those of the victories of Arcola and Rivoli which General Bonaparte won for the Republic have passed unnoticed. But should the dawn of the new century be darkened with the storm-clouds of war, when every month contains days which a hundred years before marked the progress of the glories of France growing with the fame of one man, from Marengo to Austerlitz, and from Jena to Wagram, the desire may be kindled for history to repeat itself. It may be that unknown soldiers will arise to emulate the General, who made the Consulate for himself, and turned it into Empire; for though the name of Bonaparte would give high advantage to one who bore it valiantly in the field on a battle-day of the Emperor, without new achievement it will not unaided bring its heirs to power. The wonder is that it has retained so long the freshness of its potent charm; for a hundred years are a great span in the life of a nation. When Louis Bonaparte was in prison at Ham in 1845, who remembered that it was the centenary of the supreme victory of Marshal Saxe? Yet Fontenoy was then so little distant that more than half a century later aged men are living who have seen survivors of that fight.¹ But Maurice de Saxe seems to belong to the distant past, in which Condé and Bayard, Charles Martel and the ancient heroes of French warfare, rest. The reason is that the Revolution, which his young soldiers lived to see, put a barrier between all the national history that went before and came after it; out of which change of things came forth the colossal figure of Napoleon to dwarf all other warriors.

It is vain to conjecture the nature or the consequences of the next European war. Yet when it occurs, if France and Russia are still allies and fortune favours them, to endow the French

¹ A few years ago I was staying in a château in the Aude with the Marquis de Laurens Castalet, whose father then had the liveliest recollection of having when a child seen his grandfather, who was an officer at Fontenoy in 1745. A later recollection of this venerable gentleman, who is I hope still alive, was the sight of the red coats of the British soldiers, welcomed at this Château de Castalet by the delighted Royalists, when in April 1814 they stopped there from their pursuit of Soult, after the needless battle of Toulouse, which had been fought after the dethronement of Napoleon—the slowly travelling news not having reached Languedoc in time to prevent the unnecessary bloodshed.

with an autocratic ruler, in celebration of their united victory, would be an appropriate reparation for a Tsar to perform for the share of his ancestor, Alexander I., in imposing upon France a parliamentary Constitution in 1814. Although the masses are not conversant with the details of the First Restoration, some of the enthusiasm they lavished upon the Tsar when he visited Paris was probably a tribute to his arbitrary quality, from a people which, for twenty years, had endured the worst form of parliamentary government. It was said that the plaudits of the crowds were addressed to the chief of a sympathetic nation which had taken France out of her isolation. But had it been possible for the sister Republic of America to perform that office, it may be doubted if the spectacle of the President of the United States promenading the Boulevards with his citizen colleague of France would have produced the same democratic rapture. The French saluted, in the person of the Tsar, an autocrat, the absolute master of legions, which at a word from him may one day march to victory side by side with the armies of France.

If the French had not this instinct of submission to an arbitrary ruler they would have shaken off the mechanism of autocracy which they have voluntarily endured under their democratic Republic, as though to preserve it for the hands of a master when they set one up again. From our English point of view, the increased degree of liberty which the Republic, as compared with the Second Empire, permits the French to enjoy is inconsiderable. The censorship of the press has been reduced, and there is no more restriction on the publication of legislative proceedings. But there is no liberty of association, no liberty of assembly or of procession in the street. Liberty of public meeting is subject to paternal regulation.¹ A citizen's domicile is not inviolable, and

¹ The law of June 1881, which is supposed to have conceded liberty of public meeting, was a development of the law of 1868, with which the Liberal Empire widened the *Droit de Réunion*. The permission of the administrative authorities is no longer required for the holding of a public meeting, but the restrictions still enforced are manifold. A formal declaration of the time, place, and object of the gathering has to be signed by two well-known citizens, and deposited, twenty-four hours in advance, with the Préfet of Police at Paris, with the Préfet or sous-Préfet in provincial towns which have those functionaries, or with the Mayor in smaller

if charged with a crime, he is submitted to proceedings which, to us, suggest the usages of the Stuarts. More than that, the whole machinery of centralised administration is preserved in the masterful form which it took from the hands of Napoleon. We have seen how it exists for the control of parliamentary elections; and the unfettered powers permitted to municipal authorities in matters of local government and of police are not extensive.

All this state of things, which would not be tolerated in England under a Monarchy, is in France accepted under a Republic, because the French and the English have different ideas as to the amount and the quality of individual liberty necessary to surrender as the basis of orderly government. The people of France are not oppressed by the Napoleonic rule, whether it be exercised by a plebiscitary dictator or by a parliamentary Republic. The tradition exists that they are worried by functionaries and vexed by official routine. But one may live among them for ten years without having personal experience or observation of any such grievance. For the law-abiding householder of tranquil habits, France is usually a land of untroubled amenity to dwell in. For citizens of demonstrative nature or calling it is less agreeable; and it is that minority which appreciates the slightly extended liberties enjoyed under the Republic. The peasant in the fields, the soldier in the barracks, the tradesman behind his counter, or the student among his books, is equally unconcerned at the restraints on journalism enforced under the Empire, and at the restrictions on public meetings continued under the Republic. The revival of an autocratic regime need not restore all the discipline of the Second Empire. It is even possible to conceive a sagacious dictator increasing the popularity which had borne him to power, by doing away with vexatious limitations on liberty, which a parliamentary Republic has failed to rectify. He might completely reform the treatment places. Strict regulations also have to be followed as to the composition of the bureau and the duties of the president, and an agent of the Government has the right to be present on the platform. Meetings in public squares, parks, or streets are as rigidly interdicted as under the Empire.

of untried prisoners, which, even as tardily modified in the twenty-eighth year of the Republic, retains features constituting a graver outrage on the principle of liberty than the occasional suppression of a newspaper.¹ The advantage of unfettered journalism would have been more apparent in France if it had used its complete freedom under the Republic to compel, years ago, the abolition of this injustice. The slight amelioration in the treatment of untried prisoners, after a quarter of a century of representative government, was the work neither of the popular press nor of the popular House of Parliament, but of that Reactionary institution the Senate, at the instance of M. Constans, the most autocratic of all French statesmen.

The retention by the Republic of the more stringent of the Imperial limitations on liberty throws some light on the popularity of the Second Empire. Outside Paris, which was the accomplice of the fatal follies of that regime in its heyday, as well as their denouncer in the hour of retribution, the mass of the French people in no sense regarded it as the oppressor of their liberties. This was always well known to impartial students of the period, and an unexpected witness has been found whose testimony is unimpeachable on the relations of the Second Empire with the nation. Before the vicarious disasters of Sadowa and Mexico had sounded their note of warning, M. Taine, who disliked equally the Imperial Government and the democracy, was ranging the provinces as itinerant examiner of candidates for St. Cyr, noting his daily impressions to aid his laborious studies on modern France. His original notes, mostly made in pencil as he travelled, have come to light several years after his death, and their special value lies in the fact that they were the candid comments of a minute observer, recorded for his private use. As the result of twelve years of dictatorship, he remarks that "France is organised for the benefit of the peasantry and the

¹ It may be doubted if, amid the license of the press under the Republic, journalism has ever been as brilliant or as effective as in the days of the Imperial censorship, when "Prévost-Paradol excellait avec J. J. Weiss dans l'art de tout faire entendre sans tout exprimer et où 'M. Communiqué' bombardait la presse de ses avertissements."

lower middle-classes.”¹ An Imperial proclamation on the eve of a plebiscite might well have adopted this sentence as an electioneering motto. But it was not in praise that M. Taine wrote it. It was the criticism of a philosopher impatient at finding throughout the land widespread prosperity and unambitious content instead of high ideals. Written as a condemnation of the regime, it now serves another purpose—to help to dissipate the obstinate legend of an oppressed population, which, amid tears for the disaster of Sedan, hailed the defeat as a deliverance from tyranny.

To the posthumous testimony of M. Taine may be added the opinion of his friend M. Renan, who, like him, had suffered from the arbitrary proceedings of the Second Empire. Writing shortly before his death as a contributor to the public press, he declared that the Empire in its later years “accorded the largest amount of liberty possible to be realised in France without provoking excess.” So impartial was this opinion that on the same page he mentioned how at that epoch his efforts to enter the Legislature had been frustrated by Imperial pressure. The inextinguishable fault of the Empire was, as M. Renan said in the same place, the unsuccessful war.² Indeed, there are few episodes of modern French history more pitiful than the concluding period of the reign of Napoleon III., when he allowed his efforts to establish a liberal policy to be set off by the extravagances of a Court, which brought discredit on Monarchical institutions, while diplomacy was abandoned and the army neglected. Recognising this, and far from being the

¹ *Carnets de Voyage, Notes sur la Province* 1863-65. The same burden runs through the whole series of these most interesting notes—that the lower ranks of French society were so prosperous and happy that the nation was becoming Philistine. The remark cited above was made in Anjou. In Touraine M. Taine writes, “Je retombe toujours sur cette idée, que la France est une démocratie de paysans et d’ouvriers bien administrés.” While at Marseilles, referring to the whole community, he says, “Il faut admettre en ce pays un essor soudain de la prospérité publique, pareil à celui de la Renaissance ou du siècle de Colbert. L’Empereur entend mieux la France et son siècle qu’aucun de ses prédécesseurs” (1863).

² “L’Empire libéral a fait une faute irrémissible, la guerre : après tout cependant il donna peut-être la plus grande somme de liberté qu’il soit permis de réaliser en France sans provoquer des excès.”—*Le Journal des Débats sous le Second Empire*, E. Renan.

apologist of the Second Empire, I only wish to indicate that as the parliamentary system has failed in France, and as the prospect of a long unbroken peace is doubtful, it is possible that circumstances may impel the French people to submit themselves again to an authoritative government. In that case it is conceivable that the bulk of the democracy may be as content as when it enjoyed, under a parliamentary Constitution, the same administrative institutions and similar limitations on liberty.

Dearer to the French heart than liberty, or perhaps even than prosperity, is military glory. The popularity of the Second Empire reached its height, not in the plenteous days of unsoaring comfort lamented by M. Taine, or of liberal concessions praised by M. Renan, but in the earlier arbitrary period when a war had wasted the resources of the land and covered its soldiers with laurels. The Italian campaign was an ill-conceived enterprise, involving France wantonly in complications which finally led to Sedan. Yet at the end of the century the most cherished memory of French people of all classes who have passed middle age is, in my experience, the return of the troops from Italy. Thus, an old Legitimist noble, who detested Louis Napoleon and his anti-Bourbon, anti-Papal interference across the Alps, wishing to fix the date when his club was lodged on the Boulevard des Italiens, remembered it was from that site he witnessed the exhilarating spectacle in 1859. A professor of a peace-inspiring art had one event to assure him of the period when he helped to make the renown of a famous restaurant—the march past its windows of the soldiers of Magenta and Solferino. A cottager in a distant province, who was born in the capital, chiefly recalled the street where his father was a concierge because it was on the line of procession of the glorious return from Italy. And this should be noted well: the triumphal pageant on the eve of the great Emperor's birthday, forty years ago, the like of which is the spectacle of all others desired to be seen again by the French, took place months before the Treaty of Turin gave to France her spoils of war. Two of the fairest provinces of Europe were then added to French territory. The

health-giving beauty of the coasts of Nice and of the mountains and fertile vales of Savoy, became such a rich dowry for France that she ought sometimes to remember who joined them to her when she imprecates the name of Louis Napoleon as though his only achievement were the loss of Alsace and Lorraine.¹

¹ The Peace of Villafranca was signed on July 11, 1859; the victorious troops marched into Paris on August 14. Though the designs of Napoleon III. on Nice and Savoy were suspected before the war, after his interview at Plombières with M. Cavour on July 21, 1858, so little was known for certain about them even after the Peace that the *Times*, though unfriendly to his policy, did not hint at them in its annual summary of December 1859. The first public intimation of the projected annexation appeared in the semi-official *Patrie* on January 25, 1860, and the Treaty of Turin was signed on March 24 of that year.

CHAPTER IV

THE RALLIÉS

IN the foregoing account of the anti-Republican forces in France no mention has been made of one, which in continental Europe is looked upon as the stronghold of reaction. For twenty years after the Franco-German war Gambetta's definition of clericalism as the enemy of the French Republic seemed to be justified, the Catholic Church in its political capacity having become a vast electoral agency of the Monarchical party. Had the result of this alliance been the restoration of the Monarchy, Rome would have shared in the triumph, and the Holy See, afflicted by the fall of the Empire, would have been strengthened. But the most tangible consequence of the combination was to identify in the eyes of the French the interests of the Church with the fortunes of a maladroit faction. This did not escape the notice of the sagacious Pontiff who mounted the apostolic throne the year after the "Seize Mai," when the Royalist policy of the Gallican Church had become in the hands of Gambetta one of the strongest forces to consolidate the Republic.

The first elections in France after the accession of Leo XIII. took place while the application of the Ferry Laws was displaying how far the enemies of the Church might with impunity go with their intolerant procedure. The electorate, instead of showing itself scandalised at the outrages offered by the Republic to priests and nuns and to religious emblems, deserted the clerical cause all over the land. This phenomenon could not fail to

strike the Pope, who knew that the population of France was not irreligious. At the next elections, in 1885, when the Reactionaries recovered ground, Gambetta was dead, as also was the Comte de Chambord, whose existence had specially identified the Royalist cause with the Church. Then ensued the Boulangist movement, which pressed upon the Holy See the unwelcome truth that the good of the Church was not the primary aim of the Monarchists. In Catholic châteaux the anti-clerical *Intransigeant* became the favourite organ—its editor, M. Rochefort, a martyr for the Commune, being the trusty counsellor of General Boulanger, who thus for a season brought that truant noble into sympathy with his own class. In Paris at the elections of 1889 the Faubourg St. Germain returned to the Chamber a Radical journalist, put forward by the Boulangists, rejecting a respected supporter of the Church and the Monarchy.¹ A year later the strains of the *Marseillaise*, played by Cardinal Lavigerie's Pères Blancs at Algiers in honour of the French squadron, dismayed the Royalists when wafted across the Mediterranean. When no rebuke came from the Vatican to chide the bold missionary prelate for the choice of his tune, they felt that something was wrong, and hoped to check it by stopping their contributions to the African propaganda.

The following year the impetuous Mgr. Freppel died. Named Bishop of Angers under the Empire, he had never ceased to combat the Republic both in and out of the Chamber, where he sat as Reactionary deputy for Finistère. His patriotic ardour gained him the esteem of politicians whose domestic policy he detested, while his energetic advocacy of Monarchical principles was an example and a reproach to the members of his party.

¹ In the seventh arrondissement of Paris, which includes the Faubourg St. Germain, M. Denys Cochin, a member of a family distinguished in the Catholic world for generations, was rejected in favour of M. Mermeix, a Boulangist journalist, formerly on the staff of the *Voltaire* and of other anti-clerical newspapers. The most conspicuous Boulangist leaders after the Catholic Royalists had rallied to that party were M. Rochefort; M. Eugène Mayer, editor of the *Lanterne*, who rivalled him as a "mangeur de prêtres," and was also a Jew; M. Laguerre, a freemason and freethinker; M. Laisant, one of the first advocates of military service for seminarists; and M. Naquet, the author of the divorce laws.

The Comte de Paris, publicly expressing his regret for this intrepid partisan, in a letter to M. d'Haussonville repeated the familiar theme that the only salvation for Christianity in France was in the restored Monarchy. Whereupon the Pope published his Encyclical,¹ long meditated, whereby he clearly indicated to French Catholics that their duty was to accept the Republic, it being the firmly established form of government. This prodigious document disburdened Catholic theology in France of a dogma which had been preached for twenty years, to the effect that to be a good Christian it was necessary to be anti-Republican. Its practical effect was to offer the Monarchical sons of the Church the alternative of rallying to the Republic or of abstaining from politics. The bishops, though almost all had owed their appointments to the Republic, some of them by acts of subserviency in the days of their humble priesthood, tried to explain away the force of the Papal injunction; but by a letter to the French cardinals Leo XIII. made his meaning clear.²

It had already been accepted without hesitation by the first Catholic layman in France.³ The Comte Albert de Mun was a figure to whom the Royalists had reason to look up with respect. Eschewing the way of life followed by the majority of his class, he had redeemed from barrenness the parliamentary reputation of his party by adorning it in his person with the first of French political orators. By birth a Legitimist, and by observation persuaded of the social mission of the Church to the masses, he was in reality farther removed from the middle-class Republic than are most members of the French nobility, which has become a bourgeoisie of fashionable pretension without tradition or conviction. Not recognising that fact, the triflers of gay boulevards and of sleepy châteaux treated M. de Mun as though he were an apostate who had betrayed a laborious and intelligent party; while devout women made prayers for the conversion of a Pope

¹ February 16, 1892.

² May 3, 1892.

³ M. de Mun resigned from the "Union de la France Chrétienne," a Monarchical association, on March 24, 1892, but from this act of passive obedience to the Papal injunction he soon passed to public conformity, which he announced at a Catholic Congress at Grenoble on May 23 of that year.

who had conceived the anti-Christian doctrine that France was not to be saved by a revolution in favour of the grandson of Louis Philippe.

M. de Mun was not a party-leader, because party-leaders do not exist in France ; but he was the most considerable figure among the Royalists, and his defection would have damaged a stronger cause. To him the action of the Pope was not unwelcome, because it was part of the new democratic policy of the Vatican, first formulated by Cardinal Manning, with whom the Legitimist exponent of Christian Socialism was in perfect sympathy. In spite of the impression which English Catholics would fain promulgate, that the head of their Church in England was not a great man, in his last years no British subject had so important an international position in the world as had Cardinal Manning. Thus, when it was seen that the Holy See had chosen Cardinal Lavigerie to sound the rallying note, the significance of the choice was recognised ; for it was known that the intimacy of the Archbishops of Westminster and of Carthage did not rest wholly on their aversion for African slavery. Moreover, the Pope himself, at the moment of issuing the Encyclical, announced that his resolve to enjoin submission to the French Republic was encouraged by the progress of Catholicism in the Republic of the United States ; and the chiefs of the American hierarchy most considered at the Vatican were certain bold prelates who had, in imposing their democratic policy on the Holy See, invoked the authority of the great English Cardinal.¹

Though it was part of that popular movement in the Church, which, notably in America, had made the Catholic democracy the objects of hopes perhaps too sanguine, the Papal action in France was founded on a special basis. The Holy See had not to deal with a community passionately attached to the Republican form of government, and bemoaning that the attitude of the Church thereto perpetuated a conflict between the faith of its fathers and

¹ *e.g.* The memorial on the Labour Question addressed by Cardinal Gibbons to the Congregation of the Holy Office in February 1887.

the regime of its fancy. The Pope did not imagine that the Sunday after the issue of his rescript thousands of Opportunists would troop to Mass ; while the *Domine salvam fac rempublicam*, intoned at the altars they had shunned, would no longer have the sound of a mere concordatory formula, recited with mental reservation as to the force of the Latin, but of an apostolic invocation of divine unction on the Constitution of 1875. No such phantasy crossed the mind of the judicious pontiff. He foresaw that materially the Church in France might suffer from his action, while it was improbable that the Government of the Republic would relax its vexatious treatment of the ecclesiastical establishment. But Leo XIII. was resolved that in his reign the Papacy should not be deemed identical with reaction, and in pursuing that policy he had not used ruthless haste in disavowing the French Royalists. The Church, while the majority of those who frequented its ministrations were supporters, active or passive, of the Republic, had too long seemed to make common cause with a dwindling section of the population which, frivolous in private life or incompetent in public affairs, did not scruple to use its most sacred mysteries for political purposes.

One of the most comforting practices of the Catholic Church is the commemoration of the dead. Its diffusion among all classes of the people is a touching feature of French national life, of which we, more callous in England, have now unhappily no counterpart. Apart from all question of dogma, the cult of the dead fills the human heart with sentiments of disinterestedness, purer than can be attained by any other pious exercise : so to divert to profane and sordid uses the solemn office ordained by the Church for the repose of souls is a double sacrilege. This, however, the Royalist party, with certain members of the Orleans family, did not shrink from soon after the issue of the Papal rescript. It was the centenary of the execution of Louis XVI. The Republic being then involved in the scandal of Panama, it would have been legitimate for its enemies to make what secular use they pleased of the blood-stained blunder of the Republicans in January 1793. But they conceived the idea that

requiem masses for the King would be an effective demonstration against the Government. Probably no mortal ever left this world so prepared for the supreme change as Louis XVI. Indeed the words attributed to the Abbé Edgeworth on the royal scaffold, bidding the son of St. Louis mount into heaven, express the opinion of the Church, that the unhappy monarch's earthly discipline had redeemed his intermediate pains. If modern Royalists would say masses for the repose of a king of the Ancient Regime, Henri IV.¹ were a needier object of their charity, he having been cut off unshriven and unannealed, Moreover, that gallant prince, beloved of all the people of France, was also the ancestor of the Orleans family; while Louis XVI. was but a distant kinsman, and its only connection with his death was that its chief was one of his executioners. If an Orleans prince were moved on the 21st of January to make solemn expiation for the crime of Philippe Égalité he might well do so in the privacy of his oratory. But when members of that house, under the pretence of praying for the soul of Louis XVI., made a Parisian church the scene of a fashionable demonstration against the Republic, advertised in the journals between the last parliamentary scandal and the gossip of the boulevards, that profanation of a holy rite justified anew the Pope's action.

This was the view taken by the most authorised ministers of the Church in France. The Cathedral of Tours being chosen as the theatre of a like display, the archbishop told the Royalists that they might have a low mass said in a chapel, of equal efficacy though shorn of pompous music and trappings, but that they should not turn the high altar of the diocese into an electoral tribune. In thus banning the performance Cardinal Meignan was known to be speaking with the voice of the

¹ The death of Henri IV. (1610) is not too remote to permit of masses being said for him. A requiem was said in March 1895 at the church of St. Eustache for Molière, who died in the same century (1673); and it seems that there is no limit of time prescribed by the Church, as shown by the ready wit of a Parisian priest, who, being requested by some irreverent students to say a mass for the repose of the soul of Homer, replied that he would do so the next morning if they would supply him with the certificate of the death of the father of poetry.

Vatican. He was also unconsciously repeating the language used by the Orleanist Government,¹ less tolerant than the Republic, which, to secure Louis Philippe on his debateable throne, forbade the very ceremonies unbecomingly revived by his dispossessed progeny.

Gallicanism is said to have died with Mgr. Dupanloup, its last eminent exponent ; but the old Gallican spirit still lingers in France in the thoughts and actions of Catholics who call themselves Ultramontane. This expiring struggle of the Reactionaries revealed the survival of the idea that the Church was the hand-maiden of the Monarchy. As, however, the Royalist remnant has not at its disposal the powers with which Louis XIV. coerced her two hundred years ago, it uses less feudal methods of punishing a dependent. Thus in the fervent diocese of Toulouse the bounty of the faithful to the Church had, in the years succeeding the Encyclical, so shrunk from its former abundance that a Roman cardinal wrote to his colleague, who occupied that see, complaining of the diminution of Peter's Pence. To this letter the venerable Cardinal Desprez, who was a bishop before the Second Empire, is said to have significantly replied that the Apostolic treasury had better ask the Nuncio at Paris to make up the reduced oblations. Some Catholic Royalists, when bidden by the Pope to rally to the Republic, not content with silently suspending their offerings, ventured even to retort, "Why does not your Holiness set us the example by making your submission to the Quirinal?" The force of Gallican audacity could no further go than in presenting an *argumentum ad hominem* to the Vicar of God. Less subtle was some of the language used by French Catholics towards the Holy See, and so violent that in certain dioceses the bishops were moved to interdict the circulation of Reactionary journals which repeated it.

The Papal Encyclical of 1892 may be looked upon rather as a signal that the Monarchical opposition to the Third Republic was extinct of life than as a cause of its extinction. Leo XIII.

¹ Circulaire du préfet de Finistère résumant les instructions qu'il avait reçues du Ministre de l'Intérieur, Janvier 1831.

decreed that the Royalists should not utilise the altar as the substructure of a rickety throne, which, if ever set up, would probably soon come crashing down, bringing with it part of the ecclesiastical fabric. But though the Monarchical opposition is extinct, and the restoration of the Bourbons improbable, it is not certain that the parliamentary Republic is established in perpetuity. Should it disappear, the Holy See will accept the new regime with less deliberation than it took to recognise the Republic. Meanwhile it has the credit of having created a new group to increase the confusion of the parliamentary system, and of adding a new epithet to political terminology. The word "Rallié," though its meaning is perfectly clear, is not only untranslatable into the English language, but it is one of those pregnant terms which express a whole chapter of national history.

Although the Papal rescript invented the group, it must not be thought that all the Reactionaries who rallied to the Republic at the elections of 1893 were pious Catholics, whose sole guide in public and private action was the Church. Nor, indeed, did rallying to the Republic only commence at that period. On the contrary, the great majority of Frenchmen who were of age in 1870, and who have since supported the Republic, were "Ralliés." As M. Léon Say well remarked,¹ the first of them were named Thiers, Casimir-Périer, Rémusat, and Dufaure. Some of the founders of the Republic, like Gambetta, Grévy, Jules Ferry, and Jules Favre, no doubt were Republicans from the beginning; but many of the politicians most identified with it had accepted the Empire, and probably would have continued loyally to serve it had it endured. Two of the ablest Prime Ministers under the Constitution of 1875, M. de Freycinet and M. Ribot, began their careers in the Imperial service, as also did President Carnot. Their subsequent history does not imply inconsistency. Indeed, they showed themselves to be most appropriate representatives of the great majority of the people of France, whose practice it is to accept the existing order of things. As each regime established in France during the century was a


¹ Banquet du Journal des Debats, 1893.

phase of the Revolution, even those citizens for whom it does not suffice merely to be peaceably governed have, for the most part, been able to accept the successive changes without violent surrender of principle. In a land which has had the history of France it is not necessary to have either the talent or the turpitude of Talleyrand¹ to rally to a series of regimes; and since the Revolution there have been tens of thousands of virtuous, commonplace Frenchmen who have not only submitted to succeeding forms of government, but have honestly served them.

Efforts have been made to subdivide the deputies of the group of Ralliés according to the attitude of its members to the Constitution of 1875; or to analyse it according to the motives which prompted each one to join it,—one having rallied from Ultramontane piety, another from Legitimist hatred of the Orleanists, another from weariness at belonging to a party shut out from Government favour. The attitude to the Ralliés of Republicans of longer standing was also interesting to observe. The sincerity of the new converts was generally challenged as a reason for not sharing with them any of the substantial advantages which the profession of Republicanism had earned for many years. The sterner guardians of the Constitution also cast imputations on their new allies. They suggested that the Ralliés had entered the Republic either to taint it with their reactionary ideas, or else with

¹ M. d'Haussonville, the Academician and great-grandson of Mme. de Staël, having loyally fulfilled the forlorn task of representing the Comte de Paris in France until that prince's death, felt bound to attack the policy of the Pope. Yet the tradition of his own family was one of perpetually rallying to successive regimes. His grandfather, who, born in the reign of Louis XV., lived to the eve of the Revolution of 1848, managed to be on good terms with most of the intervening Governments of France. He began his career in the service of Louis XVI., in the intimate circle at Trianon known as the *Côterie* of the Queen. He emigrated at the bidding of his father, returned to France with the Consulate, and grew so well disposed to Bonaparte that he became a chamberlain in the Imperial Court. When the Emperor abdicated he escorted the Empress Marie Louise to Blois. Having performed that duty he was forthwith appointed by Louis XVIII. to the Mousquetaires Gris du Roi, and after Waterloo he was made a peer of France before his late master had reached St. Helena. Finally, his intimate relations with the Court of Charles X. did not prevent his taking the oath to Louis Philippe when he usurped the throne. The story was related by his son, the father of the agent of the Comte de Paris, also an Academician, in his interesting *Souvenirs de l'Émigration*.

the intention of obtaining in it place and influence, so that in the day of trouble they might hand it over to the enemy. It is possible that when the term of the Republic arrives the last barricades in its defence will not be manned by prosperous insurgents who will die waving the Papal Encyclical. It is improbable that M. de Mun will scour France to rouse with his clarion eloquence a crusade against the Monarchical principle. But the Ralliés who in that day repeat the rallying process in a direction adverse to the Republic will be accompanied or preceded by several millions of Republicans whose faith has never been called in question. There is no nation in modern times which has sacrificed more for the sake of theories and forms of government than France. Yet there is none which contains a larger proportion of citizens indifferent to the name of the regime under which they perform their daily task, whose chief desire is that the course of the world may be so ordered that they may lead quiet and peaceable lives.



CHAPTER V

THE LEFT CENTRE

THERE is a section of the nation which, though almost extinct as an element in the Legislature of the Third Republic, deserves more than a passing word. The Liberal bourgeoisie has had more influence in shaping the history of modern France than any other party or group. The middle-classes which made the Revolution had previously got into their hands the civil government of the country under the absolute King, as well as its commerce and riches. In the Royal Annals of the reign of Louis XVI., it is seen that the great majority of the officials in the magistracy and in the fiscal and financial administration of the land, were members of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, many of the names in these lists bearing the noble "particule" were of roturier origin, as a large number of functions conferred on the holders nobility, which was also to be purchased by those who deemed it worth their money. In 1793 the middle-classes found themselves overwhelmed by the application of their doctrines of 1789. It is to be noted that of the heads which fell under the guillotine an immeasurably greater number belonged to the bourgeoisie than to the nobility, a disproportion too great to be accounted for by the emigration of the nobles. Executioners as well as victims were of the middle-classes, and as under the Convention, so under the comparatively tranquil Directory, there were no Revolutionary leaders who sprang from the people. The license of the Directory, like the horrors of the Terror, was

thus a phase of the first experiment of middle-class government in France. So the survivors of the Liberals of 1789 gazed dismayed at the anarchy born of their ideas, and regretting the discredit fallen upon them, they welcomed Bonaparte as the saviour of the country from the Jacobins.

The autocracy of the Consulate and the Empire was not, as is sometimes supposed, a period of complete effacement for the Liberals of the Revolution. It afforded them their opportunity of leaving a mark on the institutions of the land. Most of the bourgeoisie, indeed, shunned public affairs at this epoch, and turned to consolidating their private fortunes. But those who consented to serve an imperious master had a greater share than the politicians of any later day in constructive achievement; for the Civil Code and the organisation of the educational system was the work of Liberal jurists and philosophers employed by Napoleon in his reconstruction of society. Some of them who had not disdained the nobiliary titles which the Emperor scattered broadcast on his servants were not more content with the autocratic regime than others who stood aloof. Consequently when the Empire fell there were senators, functionaries, and magistrates, who had served it, as eager for constitutional government as those who had been in exile or in forced retirement.

After the disappearance of the one-man power of Napoleon ensued the palmyest days of the exponents of the doctrine of 1789. Whether in opposition under the Restoration, or at the head of affairs under the July Monarchy, the Liberals displayed the highest qualities in literature and in eloquence. No one who studies the period can help regretting that the French are not a parliamentary people, so that they might then have established in perpetuity constitutional government by the aid of statesmen who combined culture with common-sense and moderation with lofty ideals. The Doctrinaires and the Liberals were men like, Royer-Collard, Barante, Guizot, Rémusat, and the Duc de Broglie, whose wife inherited the opinions of her mother, Mme. de Staël, with some of her genius. They thus contained within their ranks most of the political talent of France

in the days when Lamartine and Victor Hugo were Catholic and Royalist in their ideas of statecraft, and Revolutionary only in their literary tendencies. The Revolution of July, which brought M. Thiers on the scene, inspired, by reason of its superficial resemblance with 1688, the fancy that henceforth the history of France was to proceed on the constitutional lines of the history of England. When the middle-class Monarchy ended in 1848 the last of the men of 1789 had disappeared, and the heirs of their doctrine were for the future to play only a secondary part in the affairs of the country. The Second Empire, though it submerged them, owed its foundation partly to the alarm of the Moderate party at the menaces of Socialism and of anarchy manifested in the Revolution of 1848. Under the autocracy, revived on a democratic basis, the moderation and high character of the Liberals saved the anti-Imperial Opposition from the reproach of being the party of disorder, and inflicted more damage on the Government than the violence of extreme Republicans.

After the war with Germany they became the nursing mothers of the Republic born on a day of defeat and insurrection; but having secured its existence their services were dispensed with. It is said that had M. Thiers lived to carry out his plan of making Gambetta his first lieutenant in a Ministry chiefly composed of members of the Left Centre,¹ the Liberalism of the July Monarchy would have dominated the politics of the Third Republic. It is one of the many futile speculations inspired by the unfulfilled career of Gambetta, who, according to others, would have more probably restored the Second Empire without a Bonaparte at its head. All that is known for certain is that, since the death of Gambetta and the exclusion of the Left

¹ M. Thiers, a month before his death, on the eve of the elections of 1877 which destroyed the Government of the *Seize Mai*, anticipating his return to the Presidency of the Republic, had informed Gambetta that he intended to make him his first Prime Minister, and to present him to Europe as Minister for Foreign Affairs, with M. Léon Say and M. Waddington as Ministers of Finance and of Education; M. Dufaure being President of the Senate, and embassies being given to MM. Mignet, Jules Simon, and de Rémusat.

Centre from power, there has not been found in the Government of the Republic the talent of the one or the respectability of the other.

The term "Left Centre," though a convenient designation for the old Liberals, suggests a topographical idea which belongs to the past. Even in the years succeeding the Franco-German War, when the group was of high importance, some old Republicans who later were regarded as characteristic survivors of it, did not sit on its benches. MM. Barthélemy St. Hilaire and Jules Simon, for example, in the early days of the Senate, were both classed in another group called the Republican Left; though at this distance the distinction between the opinions they professed and those of MM. Léon Say and Waddington is not striking. The former, who left the Senate for the Chamber of Deputies in 1889, in the hope of strengthening the moderate Republicans in the Lower House, achieved there a position of remarkable authority without being able to revive the group associated with his name. Indeed, the sarcasm of the Radicals was not far removed from the truth when they said that the Left Centre of the Chamber was composed exclusively of M. Léon Say.

When one studies the doctrine of that party; when one finds its tenets held by the majority of Frenchmen who are neither fanatical or indifferent; when again one sees how little the legislation of the Republic exceeds the professions of the Left Centre, it seems at first inexplicable that the fittest by training, tradition, parliamentary aptitude, and good repute to direct the affairs of the commonwealth, should have been excluded from all share of government in favour of inferior members of the same middle-class. The Liberals of the National Assembly, who parted company with the Orleanists and were the real founders of the Republic, were devoted to the principles of the Revolution; while the men who monopolised power and place after 1879 did not go beyond the doctrine of 1789. Later they shared the spoils with extremer politicians. Yet even then the advent to office of the Radicals left little trace on the statute-book of a nation where it is not the main function of the Legis-

lature to legislate. During the period, however, when the Republic was first governed by Republicans the professions of the politicians known as Opportunists, and of those of the Left Centre, were so identical that M. Léon Say was the first whom Gambetta invited to join his ill-starred Ministry in November 1881. Their views were practically harmonious¹ on the relations of Church and State, on compulsory and lay education, on the reform of the magistracy, and on military organisation.

How was it, then, that men of high ability and experience, not disqualified by their principles, failed to keep their places, although after the Seize Mai all the centralised machinery of power actually was in their hands? The disquieting presence of Gambetta in the land was one reason. The Moderates declined to adopt him as the heir of M. Thiers' testament, and honestly mistrusted him as deeply as did the intriguing friends of his own household. The nation was beginning to acclaim him, and that was enough to condemn him in the eyes of those who regarded plebiscitary tendency as the negation of the principles of 1789. The groups which henceforth were to govern France were composed of flexible politicians of no particular tradition. These men, opponents of dictatorship which would deprive them of their occupation, were competent to utilise the machinery of centralised government as a means of electoral pressure with the co-operation of obscure but powerful local coteries.

Such methods of operating upon and organising the forces of universal suffrage are the sole alternative to plebiscitary manifestation in a nation without aptitude for representative institutions. They are also repugnant to parliamentarians,—the inheritors of the tradition, and perhaps of the fallacies, of the men of 1814 and of 1830, who helped to import fragments of the

¹ M. Léon Say, after the formation of the short-lived "Grand Ministère," said of Gambetta's invitation to him to join it, "J'ai pu constater très vite que sur les questions politiques nos vues pourraient aisément s'accorder."—*Discours prononcé le 7 Décembre 1881, à la réunion des députés sénatoriaux de Seine-et-Oise*. The point on which M. Léon Say based his refusal to join Gambetta was the question of the attributes of the Senate in financial matters; but the "Grand Ministère" was condemned in advance, and every politician of note, whatever his opinions, declined to enter it.

British Constitution into France and set them up there. Their theory was to ignore, or rather to misappreciate, the Napoleonic settlement, which came between the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Charter. Similarly after the war with Prussia, their descendants imagined that the Conservative Republic, which they thought to have established, was a regular development of the Monarchy of July, the Second Empire having been an untoward interlude. But behind their new Constitution of 1875, as behind every experiment of government tried in France since the abdication of Fontainebleau, was the great centralised machine, which constitutional doctrinaires neither know how to manipulate nor wish to be taught.

The union between Gambetta and the Left Centre probably would not have lasted a year even if M. Thiers had lived to join them. Not, as is popularly supposed, because Gambetta was a Radical and they were Whigs. The reason is because he recognised the existence and the meaning of the centralised system on which French society depends; while the Liberals cherished their old phantasy that it was a framework not inappropriate for a Constitution on the British model. "Centralisation as in England" was the dream of the Liberals of the Monarchy of July. Their successors would quote Tocqueville's famous distinctions¹ between the governmental centralisation of the British Constitution and the administrative centralisation of France; but that penetrating observer saw that the latter was incompatible with the parliamentary system which he admired. Even the more modern representatives of the Left Centre seemed better fitted to be English statesmen than French senators and deputies.

¹ *Démocratie en Amérique*, vol. i. chap. 5. cf. the warning given by Royer-Collard, the chief of the Doctrinaires, in the early days of the Restoration to those who believed in the establishment of a British Constitution in France: "Donnez-vous donc la constitution physique et morale de l'Angleterre: mettez dans notre balance politique une aristocratie puissante et honorée. Or nous n'avons que des nobles et pas une aristocratie. Les institutions dans chaque gouvernement doivent être en harmonie avec le gouvernement lui-même." A fundamental distinction between the French bourgeois regime of 1830 and the middle-class ascendancy in England from 1832 to 1867 was here indicated in advance. There was nothing in the French nation which corresponded to the upper governing class, neither a legislative aristocracy nor a landed interest.

M. Léon Say, for example, though some of his most attractive gifts were those specially bestowed on the Gallic race, would have been a more appropriate minister of the Queen than of the Third Republic. Not, perhaps, in our later democratic period; but as a Peelite member of a Palmerstonian Cabinet he would have been admirable.

In England, where the evolution of politics has produced the democratic Tory party, the moderate Liberals of a past generation can become Conservatives without change of principle,—excepting when their new allies inordinately illustrate their democracy at the expense of their Toryism. But in France there is no political refuge for the moderate. The Reactionaries either represent unconstitutional views utterly repugnant to the doctrine of the Left Centre, or are the trifling exponents of pretensions which have no relation with the Government of the country. Excluded from the middle-class Chamber and from the frequent Ministries issuing from it, the representatives of the Liberal bourgeoisie, for whom few places are now to be found even in the Senate, are still welcome beneath the renowned dome of the Institute of France. Their opinions also still have a channel of publicity in the *Journal des Débats*, of which the respectable annals for a century are the history of French Liberalism.

It is not surprising that the members of this school have looked with envy to England, often idealising our institutions when not vainly dreaming of importing their similitude to France. In that country we shall never again inspire the sincere admiration which its past generations lavished upon us. That admiration was so peculiarly abstract in character that it was compromised more gravely by the distant dynastic question of the Spanish marriages, which put M. Guizot into wordy conflict with Lord Palmerston, than by the victory and defeat of Waterloo, when Englishmen and Frenchmen slew one another in order that France might be assured in the quiet enjoyment of an imperfect copy of the British Constitution.

CHAPTER VI

THE OPPORTUNISTS

THE word "opportunist" has been frequently used in these pages, as is inevitable in a treatise on the government of France at the end of the nineteenth century ; yet one may live for years in that country without ever meeting an Opportunist. In parliamentary circles persons so labelled abound. Cabinets composed of them have followed one another in swift succession, so that a diplomatist or other stranger whose duty it is to watch the political movement in the capital might have conceived that the term was almost synonymous with Republican. But away from the governmental society of Paris one may have frequented all classes of the community, and even investigated their civic faith, without ever hearing the epithet. Outside the indifferent mass of the population which accepts the existing regime without troubling about doctrine, there is in most regions a certain number of the inhabitants who hold decided views on public questions. Among them clericals and anti-clericals, free-traders and protectionists, republicans, monarchists, radicals, and socialists are apparent ; but one never meets a citizen who designates himself as "opportunist," except in the rare case of a local politician who is the agent of a deputy, or who himself aspires to a seat in Parliament.

That a passing epithet applied to the occupants of certain benches in a legislature should not be familiar beyond its walls is conceivable. But that the predominant party in a long period,

which saw the rise and fall of twenty ministries should have borne a name repeated daily in a hundred journals, yet never assumed by any portion of the electorate, is a feature of the parliamentary system to be found only in France. The word Opportunism seems to date from the first year of the Constitution of 1875. At that time ministries were composed of coalitions of Republicans and Reactionaries, and M. Thiers was still hoping to recover power. Gambetta had begun to show his capacity by leading the advanced wing of the Republicans into practicable ways. In a debate on Municipal Reform in the Chamber he urged them to substitute "a policy of results for a policy of chimeras," and said that for the former phrase he preferred the expression "policy of opportunism."¹ There was no originality in the idea, excepting for its being proclaimed by a French politician presumed to be a Radical. The term he devised was shared after his death by his adherents and his enemies. They perverted its meaning and combined to form a party which directed the affairs of the country for half a generation, without prestige and without revealing that it had any principle more definite than that of securing the spoils of office. Hence the word Opportunist became a term of reproach in the appreciation of all other groups, incurring the sober condemnation of the Left Centre as well as the intemperate violence of Reactionaries and Socialists.² For failing to carry out Gambetta's "policy of results" since his death the Opportunists cannot be blamed. Such are the difficulties of parliamentary government in France,

¹ Chambre des Députés, Séance du 12 Juillet 1876. Littré, in the last supplement of his Dictionary issued before his death, admits the word *opportunisme* as a neologism, on the authority of this speech of Gambetta.

² For instance, on the eve of the elections of 1893 the *Journal des Débats*, summing up the attributes of the various groups before the electors, said, "Plus à gauche se trouvent les hommes que faute d'épithète plus précise on désigne sous le nom d'Opportunistes. Ce sont eux qui ont dirigé depuis quinze ans la politique de ce pays. On sait comment ils l'ont conduite. On sait à quels actes de faiblesse, à quel abandon de toutes les idées de gouvernement les a réduits leur crainte de mécontenter l'Extrême Gauche" (July 25, 1893). There is no need to quote any of the extreme opinions on the conduct and character of the Opportunists. The violent press Royalist, Bonapartist, Socialist, and (except at periods of coalition) Radical, with perfect unanimity, has treated Opportunism as the synonym of every turpitude, moral, social, and political.

that if every one of their cabinets had been packed with heaven-born statesmen their achievements would not have been more ample. A reproach which they have merited is that they have ignored a precept wholesome and essential in the democratic State, that respectability is the great justifier of mediocrity in high places ; for in the scandals which have marked the parliamentary history of the Republic, Opportunist politicians have been conspicuous.

As those who professed the opinions ascribed to Gambetta have had a most preponderant influence on the political annals of the Third Republic, it is worth while to consider for a moment his character and personality. His gospel has had no lack of expositors. Besides the adroit politicians who traded on his posthumous tradition, adapting it to their own policies and performances, a band of faithful friends survived him, editing his speeches, defending his actions, and expounding his doctrine with disinterested good faith. These loyal disciples have taken pains to defend the memory of their master against the aspersion of Cæsarism potentially imputed to him. His intimate colleague, M. Spuller, who had the placid temperament of a German professor, seemed to believe that Gambetta aimed at nothing more than a gentle revision of the Constitution of 1875. Out of it was to emerge an "Athenian Republic," wherein centralisation and parliamentarism would genially harmonise ; while a contented people would, by the salutary *scrutin-de-liste*, elect patriotic deputies to vote beneficent and tolerant laws under the statesmanlike guidance of a great tribune. It is a pleasing picture. Its cardinal defect is that the central figure would have put the composite design in the category of chimeras of which he proclaimed himself the demolisher.

In my belief the Liberals, who detested autocracy on principle, the less scientific Republicans, who dreaded plebiscitary power from its association with Sedan, the professional politicians, who saw in the parliamentary system a source of profit, and the jealous, who frowned at the elevation of a compeer, were all quite right to mistrust Gambetta. I hasten to add that he was equally

justified in giving them cause for mistrust. The regret expressed in these pages at his career cut short would be meaningless if the only promise he had given were that of a parliamentary statesman. For an English writer to make such a lament by the light of his native prejudices, would be as rational as though a Russian publicist were to bewail for England the untimely death of Prince Albert as one who gave promise of being an accomplished autocrat. Autocrats are neither wanted nor produced in England, just as parliamentary statesmen can neither be reared nor utilised in France. Wherein consisted Gambetta's popularity, and why does his legend linger in France,¹ not merely on the lips of politicians who trade on his name, but in the imagination of the people? It was not that he achieved anything during his short ministry, or in the longer period of his "occult power." Nor did the men of his choice do him credit; neither when he made an ambassador of M. Challemeil-Lacour nor when he set over the Ministry of Public Worship M. Paul Bert, a freethinker of aggressive bigotry; while some politicians called by him from obscurity were among those who, later, brought gravest scandal on the Republic. Are we to believe that the people acclaimed Gambetta because they admired him as a fitting successor to M. Grévy in the Presidency of the Chamber and to M. Ferry in the Presidency of the Council, destined to take his brief turn as

¹ The idea has become so fixed in the minds of Republican politicians that Gambetta represented all their views, all their policies, and all their leaders, that the singular fictions composed in his memory should perhaps not be ascribed to disingenuousness. For example, in 1896, at the yearly pilgrimage to Les Jardies, where he died, M. Delpuech, Under-Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs, speaking of MM. Spuller and Challemeil-Lacour, who were authentic friends of Gambetta, said that "the chief ambition of these men was to have the tradition of their name united to his, as was that of Jules Ferry." The friendship of Ferry for Gambetta has been dealt with on p. 424. The orator also declared that Gambetta was the originator of the Franco-Russian alliance, "he having prepared it in his conversation with Skobeleff, and it being till his death his constant preoccupation." Now, not only had Gambetta nothing to do with the understanding between France and Russia, but in talk with intimate friends he was violently anti-Russian, and not a line of his writing nor a sentence he spoke in public suggests that he ever felt otherwise. Almost his last words in the Chamber (July 18, 1882) were "Ne rompez jamais l'alliance Anglaise." A minute account of his ideas on foreign relations is given in *Le Ministère Gambetta*, which his secretary, M. J. Reinach, wrote after his death in December 1882.

Prime Minister with MM. Duclerc, Brisson, Goblet, and Rouvier, going down to posterity on their roll of fame? The Gambetta whom his countrymen looked to was not the parliamentarian. It was the organiser of the army of the Loire. It was the orator of Cherbourg, whose invocation of hope for the mutilated frontier so thrilled the nation that it was compared to the first glass of champagne given to a convalescent. It was the leader of commanding presence, whose voice of authority moved not merely those eager for a return of military glory, but also the great mass of the French people, who ever feel the need of a master's hand to guide them. It was for this that his rivals postponed the essay of the electoral system of *scrutin-de-liste* till he was dead. Whatever its abstract merits, they believed, as he did, that under it two-thirds of the departments of France would hail the name of Gambetta in a plebiscite of undisguised meaning.

Opportunists who had charged Gambetta with aiming at dictatorship, and who, after his death, utilised his name as the trade-mark of their parliamentary group, obviously found it politic to treat his memory as that of a great parliamentarian. The protestations of his loyal disciples have not much more importance. The most intimate pupils of even sedentary philosophers are not always the best expounders of their doctrine. In the case of a man of action his associates are no better judges of his unfulfilled achievement than are other spectators. Of such an one it is useless to quote the utterances or the writings.¹ If Bonaparte had died at Rivoli, what light would have been thrown on his aspirations by a study of his *Souper de Beaucaire*,² the

¹ For example, in August 1881, being acclaimed at a great popular meeting in Paris, he said, "Ne criez pas 'Vive Gambetta.' On dirait encore que c'est de la dictature," and this is quoted seriously as evidence of his anti-plebiscitary feelings. — *Le Ministère Gambetta*, c. iv. It suggests Mark Antony's recital of what took place at the Lupercal.

² The *Souper de Beaucaire*, in which Marat and Robespierre were extolled, was published when the latter was reaching the height of his power, at the end of 1793, by Bonaparte, Lieutenant of Artillery. He had it printed at Avignon shortly before arriving at Toulon, where he first came into notice. He was given the command of the Army of Italy in February 1796, two years and two months after the siege of Toulon. His *coup d'état* of Brumaire was three years and nine months later, November 9, 1799.

tract he wrote in praise of the regicides and terrorists two years before their survivors gave him the command of the Army of Italy? Between the eager servant of the Directory and the hero of Brumaire, who overthrew it, there was not more difference than between Gambetta the defender of Delescluze under the Empire, and Gambetta the patron of General de Galliffet, who had shot down wholesale the comrades of Delescluze in the Commune; between the dishevelled Meridional who preached revolution at the Café Procope and the statesman who solicited M. Léon Say, the incarnation of the calm virtues of the bourgeoisie, to be his Minister of Finance; between the *fou furieux* of Tours and the last ally of the aged M. Thiers, who had so described him.

No statesman worthy of the name, even the most steadfast by temperament, was ever perfectly consistent. Putting aside the recantation of opinions, tenaciously advocated for mean motives, such as personal rancour or pecuniary profit, there are various influences which determine the tenor of a citizen's public life even in the most orderly communities. There are those termed subjective, which, in succeeding stages of his mental development, cause a man to change his view of the science of government and legislation. There are his associations in the commerce of human intercourse, which modify his ideas. There is, moreover, the perpetual evolution of society, which produces new needs to be ministered to by the State as civilisation progresses. Opportunism in its wholesome sense is the art of adapting one's self to changing circumstances, which thus arise even in countries free from political convulsion. In a land like France, where no form of government is stable, and where no generation is exempt from the prospect of revolution, this measured mutability does not suffice. A statesman must be always prepared to do violence to some of his professions, or else to deprive the nation of his services. In the case of Gambetta we need not speculate what course he would have taken had autocratic power been offered to him by popular voice. We can however judge what would have been his duty

had the nation asked him to substitute his dictatorship for the parliamentary system, the failure of which was already apparent. If he were under any illusion he was lacking in prescience, and his name ought not to be accounted great. Three years after his burial on the hillside at Nice, General Boulanger, without achievement or talent, was bringing the country to the brink of revolution, because the same crowds which with lamentation had escorted out of Paris the remains of Gambetta, wanting a master, turned to acclaiming a uniform and a sword, as there was no man left to lead them. It may be that Gambetta would have justified Mme. de Stael's opinion when, in appreciating Robespierre, she declared that none but a military commander could ever be a dictator in France. Gambetta had, however, a more warlike record, if a less martial name, than Louis Napoleon in 1848; and his failure seems to mark the one occasion when France might have peacefully obtained, without insurrection or bloodshed, the form of government she ever needs.

The perpetuation of the parliamentary system has been more profitable to the Opportunist group than to any other section of the French population. Whatever their relations with Gambetta in his lifetime, its members became united after his death as guardians of the Constitution, though perpetually embroiled with domestic discussions as to the filling of the tutelary places of profit. The reign of the Opportunists has been severely criticised in France. It is said to have lowered the tone of government, thus setting a bad example to the nation, and at the same time depreciating it in the eyes of foreigners apt to judge a people by the character of its chosen rulers. Whatever the justice of that criticism, it is not easy to see where France under the parliamentary system could have found more creditable statesmen. On the Chamber depends the fate of Cabinets. They are consequently composed in chief part of members of the Lower House, and one may in vain search the lists of deputies for distinguished names not included in ministerial combinations. There was M. Léon Say; but though that solitary statesman may have had only etymological difficulties in forming himself

into a group in the Chamber,¹ more material obstacles would have beset him had he essayed to form a ministry. He would not have found many sympathetic deputies to join him; and a Left Centre Cabinet composed of senators would have rivalled the Grand Ministère in brevity of life.

With Gambetta's potential Cæsarism out of the way, and the parliamentary system established for want of any other to take its place, it was clear that politicians of supple temper would preponderate in the direction of affairs. No group ever had a working majority in the Chamber; and until the Reactionaries collapsed they had always the power to overthrow a ministry by a temporary alliance with a cabal of its Republican rivals. The party which made the chief profit out of this situation was by no means destitute of men of ability. Two of them especially illustrated with remarkable talent the genius of Opportunism. They did not indeed heed the definition of Gambetta, whom they had thwarted while he lived; for though they adopted its first clause, which deprecated the futile pursuit of chimeras, they were less effective in the production of results. The origin and character of MM. Jules Ferry and de Freycinet were so different that their careers, directed towards the same end, deserve a word of record.

M. Jules Ferry was a conspicuous member of the Opposition under the Second Empire, and no doubt a sincere Republican from his cradle. His Opportunism seems to have been acquired later in life, possibly dating from the foundation of the Republic, as that event erased from his political creed its most vital articles. The previous year he had made public profession of it in an extant document, which shows how considerable was the license accorded to polemical literature under the Imperial despotism. In this address to the electors of Paris in 1869,² he demanded entire liberty of association, destruction of administrative central-

¹ M. Aynard, the eminent banker and economist of Lyons, who entered the Chamber the same year that M. Léon Say came down to it from the Senate (1889), shared his opinions on many subjects, but purists might object to applying the term "group" even to two persons.

² Circulaire aux électeurs de la VI^{ème} Circonscription, 1869.

isation, separation of Church and State, and abolition of standing armies. Years later, when rallied in the Senate¹ for his repudiation of his programme, he confessed that he had abandoned "the Utopias of youth." As, however, he was nearly forty when the Empire fell, that thoughtless stage of his life seems to have been conterminous with the reign of Louis Napoleon. Had he wished to propose to the Republic the reforms with which he threatened the Empire, he did not lack opportunity. Under the Presidency of M. Grévy he was for more than six years almost perpetually in office, being Prime Minister for more than half that period. The once indiscriminate threatener of institutions then displayed constructive statesmanship rarely repeated under the Third Republic. It was unhappily marred in his educational legislation by sectarian intolerance. Consequently the animosity of outraged Catholics was joined to the wrath of the Radicals, when the latter perceived that the universal demolisher under the Empire had developed the instinct of authoritative government. Thus the news of a military disaster in Tonkin when he was Prime Minister brought down upon him the unreasoning fury of the populace. It must, as he fled for his life, have recalled to him the similar scene when, on the morrow of Sedan, he utilised against the Imperial dynasty what he then complacently called "the patriotic and legitimate anger of the people of Paris."²

The genesis of the Opportunism of M. de Freycinet was entirely different. While his future colleague, M. Ferry, was baiting the Ollivier ministry, he was serving the Imperial Government. When, on its downfall, he was proposed as Préfet of Tarn-et-Garonne, the Republicans of Montauban threatened to sack the prefecture if a reactionary were placed there who had been "the official candidate of the Empire" at the local elections.³ Yet M. de Freycinet's surrender of principle was less

¹ Sénat : Séance du 24 Nov. 1891.

² Enquête parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale. Déposition de M. Jules Ferry.

³ Enquête parlementaire sur les actes du Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale. Dépêches télégraphiques officielles Dépt. de Tarn-et-Garonne, 5-15 Sept. 1870.

wholesale than that of his ally, whose Republicanism was indigenous. Unlike him, the Imperial functionary had never advocated the abolition of the army, or of the administrative system, or of any other establishment, which he and M. Ferry and all other ministers of the Republic have protected ever since. M. de Freycinet only displayed an agile alacrity in hailing the new regime under which those perennial institutions were to flourish anew. His official career under the Republic was of phenomenal length, commencing in the Left Centre Cabinet of M. Dufaure in 1877. Such was his flexibility that in 1887 he, the old Imperial functionary, was the nominee of the Radicals¹ for the succession of M. Grévy, supported by M. Rochefort, who, in the days of his battles with the Empire, had been protected by M. Jules Ferry,² now the Moderate candidate for the Presidency. Even in the intermediate period, M. de Freycinet resigned his first premiership into the hands of M. Ferry, who was his Minister of Education, because he could not follow his anti-clerical Radicalism. Such are the surprises of Opportunism.

In spite of M. de Freycinet's³ connection with the parliamentary scandal which interrupted his public life, but which did not impugn his personal probity, he may be regarded as one of the most respectable figures among the politicians who have ruled France since the death of Gambetta. He was one of the rare Prime Ministers of France since that event who could wear the green palms of an Academician without being ridiculous. His election to the Forty was severely criticised as an act of subserviency to the Government of the Republic.⁴ M. de Freycinet

¹ The day before the Presidential Election of 1887, M. Clemenceau having induced M. Floquet to withdraw his candidature, M. de Freycinet was the sole candidate of the Radicals.

² *e.g.* in the Corps Législatif on Feb. 9, 1870, two days after the arrest of M. Rochefort for an article in the *Marseillaise* on the assassination of Victor Noir.

³ M. de Freycinet, after nearly six years of exclusion from office, resumed his old portfolio of War in the Dupuy Ministry in November 1898 on the eve of his 70th birthday.

⁴ M. Pailleron, the Academician, told me that when M. de Freycinet, in the course of the canvass which a candidate is by tradition forced to make, called

was, however, previously a member of another Class of the Institute, the Academy of Sciences, election to which usually depends on the intellectual achievements of the candidate, without reference to his social or political position. A Frenchman who is a member of two of the Academies which meet at the Palais Mazarin cannot but be a person of distinction, and that quality must be accorded to M. de Freycinet. On the occasion of his reception, M. Jules Simon, his colleague at the Senate as well as at the Academy, wrote one of those brief essays in which he used to signalise the event of the day with sapient charm, illustrating it from the store of his recollections. He said that there were three types of Academicians elected by the illustrious company, those whom it crowned, those whom it consecrated, and those whom it created; but with genial malice he refrained from classing the last Immortal. Under the Republic, to those who have done work worthy of crowning or of consecration, the temptation to take part in politics is faint. It would be a lamentable fate for the French Academy if it set many politicians on its chairs; but to take one occasionally from their sordid atmosphere is an act of benignant charity. M. de Freycinet at his reception was not unequal to the honour conferred on him. Émile Augier was his predecessor, whose eulogy he had to make, and his appreciations of the great dramatist displayed a national characteristic both salutary and pleasing. No matter how unsympathetic a Frenchman's trade, be he politician, lawyer, financier, or functionary, he rarely is destitute of literary instinct and conscience, knowing the reasons why he admires and why he ought to admire the masterpieces of his language. Such gifts we should do well to cultivate before the English tongue ceases to be the noble organ of human expression which in time past was used to perfection in clothing thought in fine diction, with grace of style and purity of form.

A cynical student of the French political system might say

on M. Renan, that master of irony informed the Prime Minister that he would be glad to vote for him "À moins que M. Carnot ne se présente." The witty author of *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie* had the story from Renan himself.

that the reception of M. de Freycinet at the Académie Française deserved notice, because it was the most creditable incident in the history of the Opportunist party.¹ A better reason for referring to it is, that it recalls, on pages which treat of the less attractive features of national existence, the intellectual life of France, which has little to do with politics. It was observed that when M. de Freycinet took his seat beneath the dome adorned with the effigies of masters of French oratory, the practised debater of the Senate and the Chamber was less skilled in speech than the learned Academician who received him, M. Gréard, a professor of the University who had devoted his talents to the organisation of public instruction. It was a striking instance of the fact that the best of the ability of France shuns politics. The legislature had been scoured to find a statesman fit to take a seat in the company founded by a Minister of France, and when the best specimen of his class was produced he was, by a modest professor, outmatched in eloquence, the essential arm of a politician's equipment. France contains rich material for ministries and legislative assemblies, of the highest order. Around the tables of the Institute alone the gifts of oratory, wit, political science, and knowledge of humanity abound. But the French are not a parliamentary people; and while they are waiting for a regime to suit them, they are unconsciously wise in not encouraging their worthiest sons to waste their powers in an ill-contrived Parliament.

Candidates for the Academy being bound by tradition personally to ask the suffrages of its members, M. de Freycinet found himself under the delicate obligation of thus soliciting a favour of the Duc d'Aumale, whom he, when Prime Minister, had expelled from France, having previously erased his gallant name from the army list. The pitiful affair of the exile of the

¹ M. Challemeil-Lacour, who, as a friend of Gambetta, may perhaps be accounted an Opportunist, though he classed himself as a member of the Extreme Left (while M. de Freycinet belonged to the Republican Left, a more moderate group), was elected to the Academy some time afterwards. He had, however, then (1893) retired from active politics for ten years, though after his election to the Academy he unexpectedly became President of the Senate, on the sudden death of M. Jules Ferry.

Princes raised the question of the capacity in which M. de Freycinet acted on that occasion. Was it the Imperialist reviving the method of his former employers? or the Radical bent on humbling the monarchical cause? or merely the Opportunist ready to adopt any policy favoured by the current of the moment? If the first theory may be discarded, it is interesting to see whether it were as a Radical or as an Opportunist that he then acted, as it involves the question of "Republican Concentration"—the long-lived system of blending in ministries the representatives of various Republican groups. Its critics complained that its primary result was the preponderance of the Radicals, and its ulterior consequence the postponement of the establishment of party government in France.

The proceedings of the third Freycinet Cabinet, which expelled the Princes in 1886 and was never excelled in representative character, threw some light on the former proposition. Besides its versatile President, it contained, as exponents of Radical doctrine, M. Goblet and General Boulanger, then the nominee of M. Clemenceau, while among its Moderate members were the respectable M. Carnot and M. Baihaut, who was afterwards imprisoned for frauds he then committed as Minister of Public Works. Its molestation of the members of families which had reigned in France had a Radical air. Yet on close scrutiny it is seen that while there were Radicals in the Chamber who opposed the policy on principle, its most offensive details were carried out by, or at the instance of, politicians who had no real sympathy with the Extreme Left. The dismissal from the army of the Duc d'Aumale was executed by General Boulanger, who, for the moment a Radical, had been previously an obsequious courtier of that Prince, and a little later was the leader of the Royalists. The expulsion of the Duc d'Aumale was performed by M. de Freycinet to please the Moderate M. Grévy, who, at that time conniving at an agency for corrupt transactions in his presidential palace, was sensitive to affront. The high-spirited soldier, who in his career had bestowed as much credit on the French name as M. Grévy brought disgrace on it,

had written to the President of the Republic a haughty protest at his removal from the army. Thereupon M. de Freycinet, though the Prince was neither a conspirator nor a pretender, nor even the heir of a dynasty, expelled him from France, thus treating him as no Republican Minister dared treat the humblest journalist who ever libelled a public man.

These measures, deplored by Liberals, were carried out by the Opportunist Prime Minister at the instance of the Moderate Chief of the State, with the aid of a military politician soon to be the leader of the Reactionaries. Indeed, whenever the Opportunists have deemed it expedient to follow an extreme policy, they have not needed the presence of Radicals in their councils to encourage them. The anti-clerical excesses of MM. Jules Ferry and Paul Bert were accomplished under ministries which contained no Radicals. Moreover, during all the years since "Concentration" came into vogue, the action of the governments of the moment has not been perceptibly influenced by the presence or the absence of Radicals in the Cabinets. As a ministry never lives long enough to make its policy felt in legislation, and as the difference in principle and in action between the average Opportunist office-holder and his Radical rival or colleague is inconsiderable, a foreigner must be excused if he cannot see the importance attached by French politicians to the question of "Concentration."

The name indeed of Opportunist has in the closing years of the century almost fallen into disuse, except as a term of reproach,—the new generation of politicians, which had no association with it in its days of promise, not wishing to label themselves with a title bereft of prestige. The respectable Left Centre having also disappeared, the vision has been cherished of a new Moderate or "Progressist" party made up of the Opportunist remnant, and of other Republicans willing to combat with solidarity the malcontents of the extreme benches. The Chamber of 1893 seemed in its composition to favour the novel plan, as in it the more moderate Republicans outnumbered the combined groups of Radicals, Socialists, and Reactionaries. For all that, in the last Parliament

which will reach a normal term in the nineteenth century, the customary series of six ministries succeeded one another in the quadrennial period.

One phenomenon was, however, produced. For the first time since Marshal MacMahon's days two successive cabinets were formed containing not a single member of the ministry preceding it. More than that, one of these governments called itself Radical and the other Moderate. It is true that neither of these combinations has left any distinctive trace on the Statute-book of the Republic. Moreover, the hardiest proposal of the Radical Cabinet, the imposition of an income-tax, was favoured by several members of the Moderate ministry which displaced it. Nevertheless, the idea was promulgated that this marked the dawn of an era of party government.

The Chamber elected in 1898 dealt a rude blow to those who cherished this fancy. The new Parliament proved itself more incoherent than any of its predecessors. Its first act was to turn out of the Presidential chair the Radical M. Brisson. Its next act was to turn out of office the Moderate ministry of M. Méline. The defeated Premier's place was then taken by M. Brisson, to whom the House had just refused its confidence, and he formed a ministry which lasted for four months. It was defeated, and M. Dupuy formed a "Concentration" cabinet of the good old model, the disappearance of which was predicted with the dawn of the era of party government.

Even if the habits of French politicians could be suddenly transformed, it would take some years to habituate the nation to the change. To establish the party system it would not suffice for ministers to cease from intriguing against their own colleagues, or even for cabinets to fall less often and for less incoherent reasons. It is not by transactions within a legislature that national tradition is altered. It is in the country and at the ballot box that parties are organised and fortified. That the majority of the French electorate are men of moderation is certain; but they are indifferent as to the name or the professions of the Prime minister of the moment. Nor are there signs visible that

their dread of the Socialists will rouse their enthusiasm for another set of parliamentary politicians belonging to the same social class as their predecessors, and of similar antecedents. Should the middle-classes of the towns or the peasantry ever take alarm at Socialism, they will not seek their saviours among any denomination of parliamentarians. Meanwhile, ministerial instability, which the Opportunists perfected as a fine art, is likely to survive their name so long as the parliamentary system lasts in France.

CHAPTER VII

THE RADICALS

BUT for the group system the Radicals might perhaps have been a more redoubtable force in French politics under the Third Republic. The activity of some of their leaders and the comparative definiteness of their aims ought to have counterbalanced their disability of being a slender minority of the electorate ; but long before the left wing of the party allied itself with the Socialists, the Radicals in the Chamber had no cohesion excepting as a destructive power, which, however, affected ministerial combinations rather than the institutions of the country.

The scare caused by the Commune after the war was not favourable to their popularity. At the first elections under the Constitution of 1875, the deputies returned to the Chamber were divided into seven groups, of which the Extreme Left was the second in numerical importance. The largest was the Gauche Républicaine, which sat between it and the Left Centre, and contained most of the politicians who, later known as Opportunists, obtained the direction of affairs. The Extreme Left numbered about a hundred deputies, or less than a fifth of the House ; but the Radicalism of many of them was not of a steadfast or alarming nature. Gambetta, the next year to become the right hand of M. Thiers, was among them, with several of the most conspicuous Opportunists, such as MM. Rouvier and Constans, who later, for different reasons, incurred the bitter aversion of the Radicals. Others there were like MM. Brisson and Floquet, who

subsequently worked with the Opportunists, though retaining the designation of Radical, and formed with them Concentration cabinets. Some of the ultra-Radicals, like M. Naquet, the anti-clerical author of the Divorce Law, crowned their careers in the Boulangist party as the forlorn instruments of the Reactionaries. There were likewise a certain number of men of the Commune, representing the party of disorder which in later times, as we shall see, calls itself Socialist. Another type represented in the group has disappeared, leaving no successors. These were the Revolutionaries who enjoyed the lyrical patronage of Victor Hugo, just elected Radical Senator for Paris, which he thereupon lauded, as "a Babylon with the heroism of Saragossa." To have fought in the streets in 1848, to have been "a victim of December," were the chief claims on the sonorous protection of the poet; and M. Louis Blanc was the best known of the Radicals whom he supported with apocalyptic metaphors. The fact that one of the seven recognised groups of the Chamber thus contained all these conflicting elements and coteries may partly explain why the Extreme Left has not played a preponderant part in the history of the Republic.

The most conspicuous of the Radicals was M. Clemenceau, who used his remarkable talents in such fashion as to call down upon his head the resentment of his parliamentary colleagues of all the Republican groups, many of whom had largely profited from the exploits for which they stigmatised him. He devoted his great ability to destroying ministries. Though his action was often advantageous for office-seekers, whose chance might never have come had M. Clemenceau not overthrown a cabinet at a particular moment, they declined to recognise in him a benefactor when their turn arrived to be speeded from power by his mordant eloquence. The fact that he never took the place of the ministers whom he had turned out long rendered him invulnerable. When at last other circumstances made him the object of attacks, they were directed against him with a vigour sharpened by the accumulated rancours of years. He was consequently pursued into his constituency in Provence by a band of resentful

Parisian politicians, whose efforts caused the transfer of his seat to a Radical-Socialist of extremer views than his. Deputies who session after session had jubilantly followed him in his furious onsets on successive ministries then moralised on the sinister influence of the man who had thus rendered barren their legislature. Their unctuous reprobation both condemned the institution and reflected on themselves who feebly composed it; for, from the creation of the Chamber, no other deputy had been so often and so rapturously applauded by his colleagues as this relentless justiciary, when he mounted the tribune and proceeded to pass sentence on the quaking culprits of the ministerial benches below him.

If M. Clemenceau had ever been the leader of a great party, by it imposing his will on the assembly, the reprobation of his "sterile dictatorship" would have been less disingenuous. But his political following, even united with the Reactionaries, would have been impotent without the internecine jealousies of the Opportunists, who gladly utilised him. In the Parliament of 1881, in which in three and a half years he helped to upset the two Ferry Ministries, the Gambetta Ministry, and the second Freycinet Ministry, the Radicals were not fifty strong, or only a twelfth of the house. When all the Reactionaries joined them, the Opportunists and Moderate Republicans outnumbered the coalition in the proportion of three to one. In 1885 the death of Gambetta and the fall of Jules Ferry had damaged the Opportunists, so the Radicals gained ground, though the Reactionaries chiefly profited; but even then the Extreme Left numbered barely a hundred in a house of now nearly six hundred members. In 1889, after the Boulangist affair, which had allied some of the Radicals with the Reactionaries, the Extreme Left was slightly reduced, and some of its members now called themselves Socialists. In 1893 it profited from the break-up of the Reactionary party; but Radicals and Socialists combined were fewer by a hundred than the Moderate Republicans. In 1898 the Radicals, without epithet, were reduced in number, but the Radical-Socialists and Socialists were trebled in the

Chamber, so that the combined groups of the Extreme Left were as strong as the Moderate Republicans.

As in France there is no gradual evolution of political tendency, it is misleading to draw prophetic conclusions from comparative electoral statistics. For example, the polls of 1881, compared with those of 1876, pointed to the extinction of Radicalism in the Chamber in a few years: whereas at the next elections the Extreme Left retrieved its numerical position. Nevertheless the menacing peril of Radicalism is often talked of in France at times when no political scandal overshadows all other questions. The danger arising out of its association in ministries with Moderate Republicanism, and of its alliance, on the other hand, with Socialism is a subject of speculation. We may therefore inquire, first, what is the Radical doctrine which inspires alarm, and, then, wherein the special peril lies of entrusting the government of the country to politicians professing it.

A most interesting feature in the Radical programmes which are periodically put forward under the Third Republic is their immutability. The programme of 1885 was modelled on that of 1881¹ and then handed down to serve as a pattern for the end of the century. This shows that in France the party of innovation has a certain respect for what is venerable. On closer examination it is seen that the object of reverence is older even than the Republic, for foremost among the reforms instantly demanded for the salvation of the country are the "Utopias" of M. Jules Ferry's mature youth at the close of the Empire. The whole baggage of the Republican Opposition in the reign of Napoleon III. is reproduced—liberty of association, separation of Church and State, elective magistracy, administrative decentralisation, and abolition of standing armies. The world has

¹ Programme du comité radical du 18^e arrondissement de Paris accepté par M. Clemenceau: Août 1881. Programme des groupes Républicains Radicaux-Socialists de la Seine: Août 1885, etc. etc. The Radicals used to describe their programme as that of the Republicans under the Empire. "C'est le drapeau de 1869," said M. Clemenceau to his constituents of the 18^e arrondissement in 1881.

progressed in the course of a generation. Silent revolutions have been accomplished in nations not accounted revolutionary, where Radical fantasies of thirty years ago are now turned into statutes by Conservative law-givers. But in France, under a democratic Republic, the reforms urgently called for in 1869 will still be yearned for in 1900. Unfortunately antiquity, which in a religious creed inspires faith and zeal, in a political programme provokes scepticism and indifference.

It is true that the Radicals have made certain additions to the demands formulated by the Opposition under the Empire. For instance, they desire the revision of the Constitution of 1875, which could not have been asked for before that date, including the abolition of the Presidency of the Republic and of the Senate. Yet though these reforms have been threatened for only twenty years the comparative freshness of the idea will not speed its fruition, and the Republic seems likely to enter the new century unshorn of its figure-head and¹ of its Upper House. It is not suggested that the Radicals have not been in earnest; but only that they are not formidable in their Thirty Years' War against "the monarchical principle, so tenacious of life in the institutions of France."¹ In these words M. Clemenceau described the object of the campaign; and the Radical appreciation of the Republican Constitution cannot be gainsaid. It has appeared often in these pages. It indicates that, under the Republic, France is governed under the same institutions and with almost the same limitations on liberty as were denounced by Republicans under the Second Empire. It portends that if the French should ever again submit to the rule of an autocrat, he will find ready to hand in working order the machinery of authoritative government. The difference between my point of view and that of the Radicals is that what to them is a subject of complaint seems to me a matter on which to felicitate the French; for if the Napoleonic foundations of the State were removed or unduly loosened, the whole edifice would topple down. The ruin would then be more irreparable than that

¹ Réponse de M. Clemenceau au programme du comité radical : 1881.

caused by any revolution of the nineteenth century, which has merely displaced a dynasty or altered the name of a regime without destruction of the fabric.

The Radical programme differs from similar formularies issued in other lands by progressive politicians in that the demands set forth in it have a tendency to diminish rather than to augment. In England, where the fancy wardrobe of the Radicals yesterday will to-morrow be the ceremonial full-dress of the Conservatives, the extreme party has perpetually to invent new reforms to keep up with the enterprise of the Tories. In France, Conservatism is the creed of the vast majority of the inhabitants, and is thus too serious a reality to be the badge of a faction.¹ Radical reformers have therefore an immovable wall to tilt at, which in some respects may be firmer to resist their assaults under an anonymous Republic than under a form of government with a vulnerable head. So, while all the institutions menaced by Republicans under the Second Empire survive, the abolition of one of them has practically disappeared from Radical programmes. In 1881 M. Clemenceau accepted a vague scheme of "gradual substitution of a national militia for the standing army." In 1885 the only reference to the military forces in the general manifesto of the Radicals of the Seine was a still vaguer reference to international arbitration. Since then the Radicals, irreconcilable towards other institutions condemned on their programme, such as the Church, have often been active in schemes for the strengthening of the permanent forces of the nation. They long ago came to acknowledge that the state of

¹ The appropriation of the epithet "Conservateur" by the Monarchists has almost fallen into disuse, the members of the anti-Republican Right being called collectively Reactionaries, or, according to their groups, Royalists, Bonapartists, etc. Excepting as a conventional term it was entirely misleading to call the Monarchists under the Republic "Conservative," for there was not a single institution desired by them to be conserved which was threatened by the great body of Republicans. The Church was the chief subject of controversy, but clerical and anti-clerical were the epithets which distinguished the attitude to it of the rival parties, as few Republicans ever advocated the abolition of the Concordat. The mere fact that the Reactionaries desired to overthrow the existing form of government hardly sufficed to give them the monopoly of the title of Conservative in a conservative country.

Europe did not permit of theoretical experiments touching the military strength of France. Consequently their advent to office does not affect the position of the army, save in the sense that any new Minister of War may have crotchets to try during his short term of power.¹

It is a most remarkable outcome of the rule of democracy in France, that the one question on which practically all parties are agreed is the maintenance of armaments of overwhelming strength. It is not as though the army were only a visible institution like the Church, with which no one is compelled to come into contact, or merely an expensive establishment, the burden of which is indirectly felt in the incidence of taxation. There is scarcely a family in the land of which the interior economy is not directly disturbed by the military system. The whole manhood of France passes through the ranks ; and taken from home, from bread-winning, or from study, submits without complaint, if without enthusiasm, to a period of mechanical discipline. Universal suffrage giving its sanction to universal military service is an amazing phase of modern democratic rule. It is important to note that this general levy is made, not as in the days when France first raised a popular army, when the citizens of the First Republic with passion formed their battalions against the invader on their soil. The barracks and the camps are now filled with a young soldiery, recruited from every class of the nation, unborn when the last invasion left its inexorable heritage for the generation to come. To a certain extent this deliberate call to arms of those too young to have the avenging spirit of spectators of national humiliation, is a needful insurance of the commerce and resources of a country which has a menacing neighbour on its flank. But it is not sage prudence alone which impels Frenchmen of all opinions to have a mind for an impreg-

¹ During the agitation arising out of the Dreyfus case, in which the spirit of "militarism" aroused the opposition of Radical-Socialists, the members of the Chamber most active in strengthening the defences of the country were M. Lockroy, the Radical Minister of Marine in the Brisson and Dupuy Cabinets of 1898-99, and M. Camille Pelletan, the ablest Radical deputy since M. Clemenceau's retirement.

nable army. French patriotism is a sentiment easier to recognise than to define, and the disappearance from Radical programmes of theoretical protests against the principle of a standing army is full of significance for those who try to scan the future.

The Radical programme contains certain articles inspired by the doctrine of the Socialists, in addition to the perennial list inherited from the Republican Opposition under the Empire. They are not, however, due to any new alliance of the Radicals with the Socialists in the Chamber. From the early days of the Republic the Extreme Left had always an economic section in its catalogue of projected reforms. From our English point of view most of the fiscal projects of the Radicals would not have been very alarming even had there been any prospect of their adoption. In the first line always came the suppression of the octroi—the municipal tax on food, liquid and solid, generally condemned by English economists—its place to be taken by an income-tax¹ which should be levied on some undefined progressive system. The octroi still flourishes, excepting in one or two isolated localities; and the income-tax, proportional or progressive, is still a dream of politicians, many of whom are neither Radicals nor Socialists.

The imposition of an income-tax has constantly been discussed in France,² but until the close of the century it has not come within the range of practical politics. In 1894 M. Cavaignac, a Republican so moderate that the previous year he was denounced by the Radicals as a Reactionary, commenced to advocate it. He rejected the Socialist theory that taxes ought so to be imposed as to level all social inequalities, but advanced the principle, accepted by cautious politicians, that the incidence of taxation

¹ In the later schemes laid before Parliament the proposal has been to substitute the income-tax for other forms of direct taxation, the question of the octroi not being raised, as many politicians in favour of the income-tax would hesitate before interfering with the great source of municipal revenue. But in Radical programmes the juxtaposition of "Suppression des Octrois" and "Impôt sur le revenu" is intended to give electors affected by the former the impression that they will be relieved from it by the substitution of the latter.

² Between 1871 and 1894 there were thirty-four projects of income-tax laid before the Legislature.

should be so arranged as not to aggravate those inequalities. The general lines of M. Cavaignac's utterances in favour of taxing incomes would have been regarded as economical common-places in England. In France, that a politician of his moderation and repute should have made them was looked upon as an ominous accession to the forces of Radicalism. The general hostility of the French to the income-tax is primarily due to the recognition that the secretive habits of thrift practised by the people are such a source of national wealth that to disturb or to discourage them by the inquisitorial process necessary for levying the impost might produce a public disaster inconceivable in an improvident community. My own observation leads me to believe that an income-tax is unsuited to the French temperament and that its imposition would be a mischievous error. Nevertheless there are sober politicians in France, totally opposed to the Extreme Left on questions of government, who advocate it as a just and practicable impost, and who are in favour of its progressive assessment.

As the income-tax has always been advocated by the Radicals, and as it was first prominently discussed at the time when the Socialists became conspicuous in the Legislature, its opponents could with show of reason treat it as an emanation of the revolutionary party. Yet in the scare which the projected tax aroused little was heard of its progressive character. What alarmed the nation was the pretension that the State had the right to lay bare the private financial situation of each taxpayer. The scheme was proposed in 1895 by the first Cabinet in the history of the Republic which claimed to be exclusively Radical. The Budget Commission, of which we have observed the functions, illustrated their peculiarity by reporting unfavourably on a scheme for income-tax put forward by M. Doumer, the Minister of Finance. Meanwhile the same Chamber, which in 1894¹ had rejected the principle of income-tax, now further displayed the incoherency of French Parliamentary proceedings by adopting a resolution in favour of the system.² It was then that the Senate came to the

¹ *Chambre des Députés*, 11 Juillet 1894. ² *Chambre des Députés*, 26 Mars 1896.

rescue of the undulating Chamber, and by forcing the Radical Ministry to resign, gave the erratic deputies the chance of supporting for a season a Government described as Moderate.

The accession to office of this Moderate Cabinet containing no minister classed as Radical, shelved the subversive policy of income-tax. But as some of its members were in favour of the principle, we have still to elucidate the meaning of moderate politicians when they say that the occupation of office by the Radicals is a danger to the commonwealth. Where does that peril lie? An examination of Radical programmes shows that the demands in them remain as unsatisfied as though the five-and-twenty Cabinets since M. Grévy became President had not abounded in Radical Ministers. The performances of the Concentration Ministries, which were said to be ruled by their Radical members, seem to justify the sarcasm applied to them, to the effect that a combination of fire and water produces nothing but vapour. When at last the Radicals filled all the places in a Ministry, they seized indeed the opportunity of putting forth a fiscal policy, long an article of Radical faith; but its general principle was accepted by some of the very Ministers who, to tranquillise alarms, took the place of these too ardent reformers.

No doubt if the party system existed in France, and if Ministries lasted for the duration of a Parliament, the advent to office of a Cabinet controlled by the Extreme Left would have serious results. But it is useless to speculate what the Chamber of Deputies might do if it were the House of Commons. Ministries, whether termed Moderate, Radical, or Concentration, never live long enough to leave a distinctive mark on legislation. With the exception of the reorganisation of the army, which was a national work inspiring patriotic unity, the only great policy ever carried out in the history of the Republic was the organisation of elementary education in the first days of the Grévy Presidency, which the change of Ministries did not interrupt. Though the secular and gratuitous principle imparted to it was an article of the Radical programme, it was supported by Republicans of every group, who thus retorted on the clericals for their efforts to

overturn the Republic. It is true that the intolerant application of the law, as well as some of its severer provisions, vexed many Liberals of the Left Centre. But the most rigid antagonists of ecclesiastical pretensions were MM. Jules Ferry and Gambetta, who were not Radicals in the French sense of the term, both having become high-handed statesmen of the type denounced by the Extreme Left as "men of government."

The close scrutiny of Ministers styled Radical does not convince a spectator that they are more likely to ill-govern the country than their colleagues or successors, who call themselves Opportunists or Moderate. M. Brisson has been perhaps the most conspicuous Radical since M. Clemenceau quitted public life. He has been Prime Minister, President of the Chamber, as well as candidate for the Presidency of the Republic, and his integrity is respected by his opponents. Some of them, however, criticise his "Jacobin spirit"; but this would only seem to mean that if the Chamber of Deputies had had the powers of the Convention, M. Brisson would have sent to the guillotine all the Gambettists and the Ferryists, until his own head had been removed by M. Clemenceau; or else it signifies that were M. Brisson absolute master of France he would abolish the clergy, and make other public arrangements agreeable to his theories.

But we have not to deal with what a man might have done in the Revolution, or what he might do under circumstances never to arise. Therefore the stranger who studies French politics cannot see why the respectable M. Brisson, who presided over the Chamber and called himself a Radical, is more harmful to the State than the respectable M. Loubet, who called himself a Moderate and presided over the Senate.¹ It is true that foreigners cannot always detect distinctions in national life most apparent to native eyes. For example, in the British Islands, where religion and not politics induces the group system, an acute and conscientious observer like M. Taine could not discern the difference between the United Presbyterian and the Free Church of Scotland; and later, less discriminating French deputies describe the English missionaries

¹ Succeeded M. Faure as President of the Republic in 1899.

in Madagascar as Methodists, though none of them belong to the persuasion so denominated.

The dreaded Radical Ministry, which caused loud commotion during its brief existence, on analysis does not seem to have been composed of very dangerous elements. Its president, M. Bourgeois, who had held portfolios in several colourless cabinets, was a former Préfet, who, it is said, was confidentially noted at the Ministry of the Interior as an official of reactionary leanings. M. Cavaignac, already mentioned, was a politician of moderation and high character. M. Lockroy, a member of several cabinets, is better known as the kinsman of Victor Hugo and an artistic man of letters, than as an extreme politician. M. Guyot-Dessaigne, like certain statesmen of other Republican groups, had once been a devoted functionary of the Empire. M. Ricard, a thriving leader of the bar at Rouen, was not regarded in that calm city as a firebrand. M. Berthelot, like M. Paul Bert and other men of science, was an advanced anti-clerical, but his opinions on social questions were less dogmatic. Most of the names, indeed, conveyed the idea of periodical office-holding rather than of inflammatory policy; but one of the new men deserves a word of mention. On M. Doumer, the Minister of Finance who had propounded the fiscal scheme of his Government, the hopes of his group were fixed when turned out of place; but while he was preparing to fight the good fight on the eve of a session, his Moderate rivals laid hands on him. They took the view expressed in these pages, that between a Radical and an Opportunist as an instrument of government there is no appreciable difference, and made him Governor of Indo-China. His colleagues of the Extreme Left cried treason, and the boulevards sneered, as the bicentenary of Dupleix was raising the problem of the best means of recovering for France an empire in the East; while the Moderate Ministry despatched its Radical satrap with the valediction—

Solventur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis.

We must renounce also the theory that a Radical Ministry is dangerous, because of the opinions on social questions cherished

by its members in spite of their mild disposition. No one has repudiated more explicitly than M. Bourgeois the Socialist creed. After the fall of his Ministry, when unfettered by office, he might have had some excuse for paying court to the group which had upheld it in the Chamber; but in reply to one of its supporters, M. Millerand, a conspicuous Socialist member for Paris, who had recently declared that "the only genuine Socialists are the Collectivists," the Radical leader retorted, "I am not a Collectivist, for there is no agreement possible between the French Revolution and the ideas of the Collectivists, which are un-French in their origin."¹

Nor is the treatment of the Church more rigorous under a Radical Ministry than at other times. There are, indeed, Radicals and Socialists whose hatred for Christianity, or for all religion, is a malign passion far more intolerant than any form of philosophic anti-clericalism. But anti-clericalism itself is out of fashion in France, and a Radical minister to please his most fanatical followers could not go so far as in the days when the clerical encroachments of the *Seize Mai* drove even Liberals into a persecuting mood. On the other hand, a Moderate Cabinet will encourage by the bestowal of honours the intolerance of an anti-clerical tyrant in the provinces in the hope of gaining his electoral support. Or a Moderate Minister of Public Worship, wishing not to be denounced by Radicals as a clerical, will assume an attitude to the dignitaries of the Church which is revolting to a spectator ignorant of reasons of State which should permit a young politician to insult an aged fellow-citizen. That the pretensions of the clergy have sometimes to be checked by the Government is admissible; but the public letters addressed by ministers, Moderate as well as Radical, to archbishops and bishops deemed to have infringed some article of the Concordat, are documents of which the authors ought to be ashamed. After all, a venerable prelate is a Frenchman usually looked up to with reverence and respect by a number of the French population. This is a rare experience for a minister of the Republic who,


¹ Discours à Melun, 25 Mai 1896.

when he turns the offensive phrase of menace or of reprimand, perhaps compares himself with Napoleon taking to task Pope Pius VII. To the outside world it only suggests that a commonplace politician is doing homage to his anti-clerical critics.

Another peril said to be likely to arise from a Radical Ministry is the possibility of conflicts with the Senate ; but they have arisen under Governments of all hues, and the one most placidly regarded by the nation was that provoked by the Bourgeois Cabinet. We may pass to the most valid objection to the occupation of office by ministers representing exclusively the groups of the Extreme Left. It is made by moderate men who are not place-hunters, and are therefore impartial witnesses on the question why it is less desirable that one set of ineffective politicians rather than another should have the administration of the country in their hands. The objection is not one which would occur to those who have studied parliamentary institutions only in the land of their birth. It is that the administrative patronage in the hands of French ministers is so vast, and the centralised Government controlled by their nominees is so powerful, that a Cabinet compelled to favour the party of disorder may, by placing its agents in positions of authority all over the country, bring the State to great peril. If a Radical Ministry, completely in the hands of the Socialist group, could remain long enough in power, it might deliver the nation to anarchy. We have seen how under the parliamentary system the enormous administrative patronage has fallen into the hands of members of Parliament, and how the *Préfets* and other powerful functionaries may feel that an influential deputy is their master rather than the minister. If a Radical Ministry at the orders of the Socialists were thus to pack the administrative service, the judiciary, and the police with agents of the party of disorder, civil war would ensue. One can imagine what would be the effect if the *Préfet* of Police were at the orders of the members for Paris ; or if Socialists were installed at the prefectures of all the industrial departments where strikes sometimes take the semblance of insurrections under the glowing eloquence of professors

and journalists who sit on the Extreme Left benches of the Chamber.

No doubt, to lovers of representative government it is sad that the deputies for Paris and other populous centres should see their constituents administered by unsympathetic officials. But the student of French institutions has to remark many anomalies which arise from the ill-assorted marriage of the native centralised machine and the foreign parliamentary system. One result of the incompatibility is the special signification acquired by the term Radical under the Republic. We have seen that in political doctrine there is little diversity between the Radicals and Republicans otherwise designated. But the latter proclaim their distinctive mark to be that they are "men of government," having no commerce with the party of disorder and of social disintegration. How long they will be able effectively to abide on the path of governmental discipline, or to persuade the nation of their capability to keep order, will depend on the nature of the vicissitudes, exterior and domestic, in store for France.



CHAPTER VIII

THE SOCIALIST GROUP

THE philosophy and tenets of French Socialism ; the enumeration of its sects and their rivalries ; the attitude of various categories of the population on social questions ;—all these subjects I hope to study in another work which will treat of economics and the relations of capital with labour. Here we have only to do with the Socialists in their parliamentary capacity ; to observe their general policy and demeanour ; and to see how it is likely to influence the solution of the problem of government in France.

The General Election of 1893 was the first at which the Socialists formed a distinct political party, they having in the previous year made a preliminary reconnaissance at the renewal of the municipal councils. The moment was favourable for the organisation of a group appealing to the discontented in the nation. The Boulangist army, through the ranks of which most of them had passed, was disbanded. Its discomfiture and the interference of the Pope had disorganised the Reactionaries, and in certain regions, which had been their strongholds, a number of votes were transferred from the Extreme Right to the Extreme Left. The most potent, however, of the causes to aid the new group at the polls was perhaps the Panama scandal, which brought discredit on important Republican groups, and was moreover turned to profit by Socialist leaders, who with bold ingenuity suggested that "Panamist" and Capitalist were synonymous terms.

The Socialists made a boisterous entry into the parliamentary system, somewhat out of proportion to the suffrages they obtained. About five per cent of the votes on the Register, and about eight per cent of the votes recorded¹ were given to their candidates throughout France ; but as Paris furnished nearly a third of their supporters it was clear that the provinces were not carried away by the new movement. Nevertheless, the result was momentous in bringing into the disorganised Chamber over thirty determined politicians, who, representing several sects, knew how to sink their domestic differences when face to face with the undisciplined majority. These occupants of the benches on the Extreme Left did not compose a new party suddenly brought into being by the discontents of the moment. The Socialist label was fresh ; but the deputies strongly resembled previous occupants of those seats who, in the past, had helped the Reactionaries to abbreviate the term of Ministries, and some of the members now returned under the new designation had sat before as Radical-Socialists, Boulangists, or Revisionists.

As for the electors, a study of the regions where they gave the most votes to the new group seems to show that the support accorded to Socialism in the provinces has not much reference to geographical position or industrial occupation. The provincial electorate which in 1893 gave the largest proportion of votes to the Socialists was that of the Cher, an agricultural department.²

¹ If the Radical-Socialists be reckoned with the Socialists who repudiate any qualifying epithet, about eight per cent of the total votes on the Register, and eleven per cent of the total votes recorded, were given throughout France to the candidates of the united groups in 1893. But many Radical-Socialists declined to be classed as Socialists, although on the other hand there are Radicals not ranked as Radical-Socialists, such as M. Pelletan, who work in close alliance with extreme Socialists. The distinctions between French parliamentary groups are often obscure, and in Paris the most observant expert has difficulty in distinguishing between a Radical-Socialist and a Socialist without epithet. The elections of 1898 largely increased the strength of the Socialists in Parliament, 57 Socialists and 82 Radical-Socialists being returned. They polled 19½ per cent of the votes recorded, and they obtained nearly 24 per cent of the seats in the Chamber.

² At the elections of 1898 the Cher took the second place among the Socialist electorates in the provinces with 59 per cent of the polls given in favour of Socialist and Radical-Socialist candidates. The first place was taken by the Gard with 61 per cent of the polls. That department, of which Nîmes is the chief town, has always been conspicuous for the violence of its politicians, as has also the Var, which in 1898 took the third place. But the most remarkable of the Socialist

Its most populous place is Bourges, a city of 45,000 inhabitants, which travellers associate less with modern phases of politics than with the sumptuous splendour of a noble church, redolent of the age when the social question was regulated by the power which raised its stately walls. In that constituency, which contains a Government arsenal and some porcelain works, the Socialists had a large minority. In the next division, which, chiefly rural, includes Vierzon, a railway centre given to strikes, they carried a Communard of local origin. At the other end of the department a sitting deputy, previously classed in another group, was on his re-election counted as a Socialist.

As one explores the byways of this central region of France, which from the Berry to the other end of Burgundy is wont to elect deputies of impassioned opinions, one is struck with the profound stillness of the villages as well as of the country-side. To the passer-by it seems as though the silent land were peopled by a race of as sluggish tradition as the long-submissive rustics of England. But the old ploughman guiding the oxen, and his neighbour trimming the vines, are the grandsons of the men who burned the châteaux and sacked the churches a year or two after Arthur Young rode this way noting the causes about to enkindle the peasantry. The spirit then aroused lingers still. The owner of a scrap of ground asked to vote for a politician put forward by the organisations of the local towns would bid the candidate begone if he accosted him with a scheme of land-nationalisation. Yet he might vote for its promoter if it were wrapped in a programme of Revolution, which word has no sound of horror for him.

Across the Loire in the Nièvre the proportion of the electorate returned as having voted Socialist in 1893 was comparatively small,¹ though it is a department where any cause is popular successes at these elections was in the Creuse, an entirely rural department of Central France, which took the fourth place with 57 per cent of the votes polled. Although the results of the 1898 elections differed from those in 1893, they justified what I have said above, as to the support of Socialism having little to do with geographical situation or industrial occupation.

¹ In 1898 the Socialist vote of the Nièvre (including those given for Radical-Socialists) amounted to 48 per cent of the total polls.

which represents discontent. It thus became Boulangist, and when that movement was ended it re-elected most of its "Revisionist" deputies as members of various Republican groups. Farther east the department of Saône-et-Loire is also interesting to examine. It contains the fine grazing region of the Charollais, the wine-growing country around Macon, and a great coal-basin which employs the majority of the electors in two constituencies. Neither Boulangism nor Socialism ever found a footing here, though at Montceau-les-Mines dynamite was first used in France as a political argument. The electoral tone of the department is Radical of the shade which supports "Concentration" Ministries; but one of the industrial constituencies returns a Monarchist. The colliers and iron-workers of Le Creuzot, in sending to the Chamber their anti-Republican employer, do not, however, signify that there is a solitary population in Burgundy ready to die for the Duc d'Orléans, but only that here the relations of capital and labour are of a paternal character.

It would need a special monograph to analyse the electoral tendencies of the French populations according to locality; but before the interesting work was completed it might lose its value, as some movement unconnected with the social question, or with the doctrine professed by any existing political group, suddenly sweeping France like a whirlwind, might leave the monographist, with his conclusions, disconcerted. As we have sufficiently seen that in the midland region the manifestation of Socialism is intermittent, we will go to another part of the country where the conditions are different. The centre of France, from the Berry to the valley of the Saône, is a great rural area dotted with industrial districts, so far from one another that they affect the general character of the population almost as little as they deface the landscape. In contrast to this, on the north-eastern frontier the two most populous of all the provincial departments present, in parts, an aspect resembling that of some of our manufacturing and mining counties in England. In portions of the Nord and of the Pas de Calais clusters of busy towns join one another, mingling their smoke; and this is the region where the Socialists have, outside

the capital, the greatest numerical support at the polls, though the proportion of their votes to the electorate is less than in certain rural districts. Another diversity between this region and central France is that there the population is anti-clerical in tendency, while here in Flanders and Artois it is generally religious. Thus, while the Church was yet a Monarchical agency, at the elections of 1885, the two north-eastern departments sent a solid phalanx of Reactionaries to the Chamber, the Nord returning twenty and the Pas de Calais twelve members pledged to overturn the Republic, which had not a single deputy to support it from this industrial region. Three years later the electors of the Nord changed the note of their hostility to the Republic by choosing General Boulanger at a bye-election with 170,000 votes; but with his downfall the Reactionaries lost their predominance in the north-east. In the reorganisation of parties neither in the Nord nor in the Pas de Calais did the Socialists carry many seats in 1893 and in 1898. Three deputies at the elections in each of those years were classed in their groups; but the large number of votes distributed among their candidates in the two departments were significant in this important region where the Socialists were taking possession of the municipal councils of some of the biggest and richest towns in France. The subject of Socialist municipalities cannot be dealt with here; but it may be noted that the province wherein their rise has caused most alarm is not the home of an electorate which has long had a tendency to Radicalism, whereof Socialism is sometimes considered the development.

In the south the Socialist vote may be referred to that meridional exuberance which in the private relations of life finds an outlet in loud words and violent gestures. Whatever the genesis of Socialism in other latitudes, it is not a scientific philosophy in the south of France. It is cultivated by the same type of citizens who appear sometimes in one of those amazing trials for electoral corruption which the whole community seems to enjoy as a roistering farce, or who threaten insurrection when a bull-fight is stopped. To popularise the Socialists under the sun of Provence and Gascony it is enough for them to be denounced

as the party of disorder ; for liberty in the eyes of the Southerner is not the power to change the law, but the faculty of breaking it. It is said that serious apostles of German Socialism who have ventured into France are as shocked at the trifling of their joyous brethren of Toulouse and Marseilles as was Robespierre, grim product of the fogs of the north, at the lightsome enjoyment of the Revolution displayed by Barras of the Var and his compatriots.

The Socialism of one great southern city cannot be ascribed to this quality. At Bordeaux, where the party makes an outward show of progress, the inhabitants, though given to all the genial amenities of life, are not expansive or effervescent like their Gascon neighbours. The Bordelais attribute their unexaggerated temperament to the Plantagenet occupation of Guienne when the race was mingled with an Anglo-Saxon strain, and the superficial aspect of the Girondin movement in the Revolution maintained the tradition of moderation. The political history of the department prior to the appearance in it of Socialism was dissimilar to that of the populous region of the north. While the Pas de Calais and the Nord were returning a solid body of Monarchical deputies the representation of the Gironde was as thoroughly Republican. But Republican vine-country and Reactionary coal-field alike rallied to Boulangism, and at Bordeaux Socialism seems to be its after-effect, the Royalists aiding Socialist candidates against Moderate Republicans. In a constituency within that city, of 20,000 electors, 6000 votes, including those of Reactionaries and malcontents of all sects, sufficed in 1896 to return a Socialist to the Chamber, showing that the mass of the population was not of that party. The vast majority of electors who abstain from voting may, for want of a better name, be called Conservatives ; that is to say, they are members of the great class which primarily favouring the existing regime might, if it failed to repress disorder, be moved to call for a strong Government to take its place. This great body is for the most part composed of the moderate people classed in these pages as the indifferent in politics, and their tendency to abstain from the polls is a capital obstacle to

the formation of a Moderate Republican party. Though the rivalries of parliamentary groups have no part in their industrious lives, they may have a determining influence in the solution of the problem of government in France, if ever Socialism drives into terror that serious element of the nation.

Near the Gironde is the rural department of the Gers, in population barely equal to the city of Bordeaux, its chief town Auch, though the seat of an archbishop, being little bigger than a village. For a long time its deputies and senators were nearly all Reactionaries. When the Republicans won some seats in this Imperialist stronghold it was noticed that the Socialists had become a voting force, and, at the senatorial elections in 1897, it presented the unique phenomenon of being the only department in France returning none but Radical-Socialist senators, representing ideas which at the Luxembourg are relatively as extreme as those of the most ardent revolutionaries in the Chamber. This is another example of the Socialists gaining a footing in an electorate which previously had lent its forces to a Reactionary party pledged to overturn the Republic. So many regions, which, in the last decade of the century, have given suffrages to Socialism, had been in the previous ten years Bonapartist or Clerical, Boulangist or Royalist, that it would seem that the Socialist vote in France is rather an expression of discontent or of disorder than a serious evolution towards collectivist doctrine.

The attitude of the peasantry to that doctrine can be noticed only incidentally here; but a few words ought to be said on the apparent anomaly of small proprietors, avid of the soil, voting for advocates of its nationalisation. The inconsistency of voting for a Monarchical candidate at one election, and for a Republican at the next, is explicable, as the elector may have no rooted prejudice in favour of the principle advocated by either; but that a peasant with his craving for land, should support a politician who would destroy private ownership in real estate does not seem reasonable. An explanation is that the Socialist, far from trying to teach the small cultivator that he would be happier as tenant of the State than tilling his own plot, appeals to his ruling passion. To

the owner of the tiny scrap of ground he points out the bigger holding of his neighbour, which would have to be shared between the two if the Socialist doctrine were put in practice. This primitive fallacy is said to have a certain effect on peasants who know nothing of politics, but who care a great deal for land.

Another cause of the growth of the Socialist vote is the depopulation of rural France. This great evil, probably the most serious which the nation has to face, graver than any question of government or of politics, has a twofold phase. First there is the unnatural decrease in the birth-rate. The chief danger arising out of this shows that Malthus never anticipated the system of universal conscription, under which the very existence of a nation might depend on the maintenance of its manhood on numerical equality with that of its neighbour across the frontier. The peasants' determination not to have many children is primarily due to the testamentary law which enforces the division of property among offspring. It has, unhappily, become a habit, and has encouraged the idea that the land is incapable of supporting even those who already dwell upon it. Thus an impulse, new in France, and less pressing there than in other countries, is given to that migration of rustics to the towns which afflicts all modern communities. The peasants who join the urban population find life harder in the streets than in the fields, and it is not surprising if they adhere to doctrines which promise to remedy their disillusion. In nearly three-fourths of the departments of France the population is decreasing.¹ Within them an interior migration also takes place, the rural areas sending their natives, who do not

¹ In 1896 only 24 departments were increasing in population, while 63 were diminishing, the situation having been just reversed in ten years, as in 1886 there were 58 in which the population was growing. It is impossible to generalise on the subject, or to associate in all cases political sentiment with this phenomenon, as in the localities where population continues to grow the increase is by no means everywhere due to immigration. In Finistère and the Morbihan, for example, there is a high birth-rate owing to the influence of the Church. Five of the departments on the eastern frontier show an increase, and only one of them is essentially industrial in character, though in the others the rise of manufacturing towns is one of the consequences of the annexation to Germany of Alsace and Lorraine, French industries in those provinces having been removed within the new frontier.

depart to great cities far away, to attenuate the resources of the country towns, and to import into them an element of discontent. This may account for some of the Socialist votes in certain departments which contain no industrial centres. But the migration from villages to towns within the same department, or from rural districts to industrial centres in the provinces, is trifling compared to the movement towards Paris. The last census returns of the nineteenth century displaying the widespread decrease of the birth-rate are full of ominous significance for the future of France. The increase of the entire population was faintly perceptible, being only 175,000 in five years, and this was more than accounted for by Paris and its suburbs, which in 1896 had 200,000 more inhabitants than in 1891.

Not that the influx of provincials to the capital affects the spirit of its electorate, except in so far as the immigration of workmen in search of employ increases the discontent in cities. Whatever the condition and sentiment of the provinces, Paris retains its revolutionary tradition; and the influence in the country of that commanding city is somewhat anomalous. No metropolis since the days of antiquity ever had such a sway, moral and intellectual as well as administrative, over a nation; and the centralised system was not artificially imposed on an unwilling people, but grew up with the predominance of the capital. Nevertheless, France has rarely accepted the political lead of Paris. The history of a century has illustrated that proposition—from Thermidor, when Robespierre found vain the shelter of the Hôtel de Ville and the protection of the Commune, to the Coup d'État of Louis Bonaparte, when the nation condoned the shooting down of the politicians of the boulevards. Again, when the revived Commune set fire to the city of its birth as a spectacle for the victorious Germans, the trouble had little echo in the country, considering the efforts of the International and of the emissaries of the capital to inflame Lyons, Marseilles, and other centres where there is always an insurrectionary element.¹

¹ Enquête parlementaire sur l'Insurrection du 18 Mars; Rapports de MM. les Premiers Présidents de Cours d'Appel.

Throughout the period of the Republic the political opinion of the provinces has never for a moment followed that of the Parisian electorate. Once the capital obeyed the lead of the provincial democracy. When General Boulanger had been acclaimed by the suffrages of successive departments, Paris elected him too with a gigantic vote. It seemed as though the voice of the capital were sufficient to condemn a cause; for at the general elections the same year, while the volatile city remained partially true to its latest idol when shattered, the rest of the nation turned its back upon him, and the metropolitan members composed one-half of the Boulangist faction in the Chamber of 1889.

If the capital and the country marched in unison, the preponderance of the Socialists in the electorate of Paris would be more momentous than it is, for they outnumber all the other groups put together, including the Radicals.¹ If the great mass of Parisians, who by their votes profess adherence to Socialism, composed an army of earnest enthusiasts impelled by reflection and experience to demand the reorganisation of society, or even if they were directed by grave leaders, convinced of the scientific truth of definite doctrines, then the prospect of social and fiscal changes would be imminent. But the Socialist electorate of Paris is feared not as a serious section of the democracy, determined on organic reform, but as the inconstant party of disorder bent on revolution. They are the Internationalists of the Commune and the Boulangists of yesterday, not pursuing one steady doctrinal aim, but ready to join any movement which will lead to fighting in the street.

It is not their critics who traduce them as the successors of the men of the Commune. It is their own loudest boast that

¹ At the elections of 1893 in Paris 220,000 votes were recorded for Socialist and Radical-Socialist candidates, the latter, who are hardly distinguishable from the former in the capital, obtaining 45,000. The Radicals, Moderate Republicans, Ralliés, and Reactionaries obtained 190,000, of which 112,000 were given to Radical candidates, many of whom were not far removed from Socialism. There were also 32,000 votes given to Revisionist candidates, relics of Boulangism, at least half of which may be reckoned as belonging to the party of disorder. In 1898 the figures were even more striking. The Socialists and Radical-Socialists polled 263,000 votes, the Radicals 33,000, the Moderate Republicans 66,000, the Ralliés 13,000, and the Reactionaries 27,000.

they are the successors of the incendiaries of the Tuileries and of the assassins of the archbishop and the other hostages. Every year, when the 18th of March comes round, the Socialists of various sects glorify the Commune. One of its old members, M. Vaillant, Socialist deputy for the Charonne division,¹ which gave notice to Gambetta that the electors of Paris were no longer with him, said, in celebrating the twenty-fourth anniversary of 1871: "The working-classes throughout the world felt as though a blow had fallen on them when the Commune fell, and henceforth growing in the popular imagination the Commune has become for them the image of the future which they have to conquer." On the same occasion M. Sembat, deputy for Montmartre, where the murder of Generals le Comte and Clément Thomas was the opening act of the insurrection, wrote, "The Commune was a paroxysm of generous fury." Another writer in the official organ of the Socialist party declared that "The Commune supplied the irrefutable proof that the morrow of a revolution might be awaited without disquietude."²

It is important to notice that the Parisian Socialists of the end of the century unite in approving the acts of the Commune, for that movement, after the fall of the Empire, was by no means identified with Socialism. In our country the opposite impression is current, because English writers, many of whom ought to know better, apply the term Communist, which has a definite meaning both in our language and in French, to the Commune of Paris, with which it has no other connection than an accidental assonance.³ But the error is more confusing than the

¹ At the General Election of 1881, little more than a year before his death, Gambetta was candidate for two of the divisions of the 20th arrondissement, and at Charonne he was practically defeated, not obtaining an absolute majority, and declining to submit to a second ballot. He had been returned by the first division, but not by a vast majority, and his lukewarm treatment in a quarter distinguished by many of his celebrated speeches showed that he had parted company with the Radicalism of Paris.

² *Petite République*, 18 Mars 1895.

³ The French term "Communiste," like its English equivalent Communist, signifies a person who believes in the community of goods and desires the abolition of private property. The word "Collectiviste," more in use at the present day, was described at the inquiry into the Insurrection of the 18th of March as defining "Communiste honteux." At all events "communiste" is derived from "commun,"

mere misuse of a term, as among the members of the Commune there were Communists, just as there were Freemasons¹ and adherents of other sects which had primarily nothing to do with its aims. Its fundamental doctrine was merely the absolute autonomy all over France of the administrative areas called Communes. The chief theoretic objection to it is not the introduction of a wide system of local government in a country used to centralisation. It is the tremendous power which its adoption would give to the incendiary inhabitants of Paris, who would, with it, constitute a revolutionary empire within the State. There were Communist Socialists opposed to the Commune; while some of its most ardent defenders were the adversaries of Communism, which they said had been forced into France by the influence of foreign delegates whom the French revolutionaries met at the congresses of the International.² Thus the Socialists who laud the proceedings of the Commune after the lapse of a quarter of a century, do so, not because of their zeal

and has nothing whatever to do with the administrative term "Commune," though of course the words have the same Latin root. There are several adjectives and substantives which have come into the French language to designate the uprising of 1871, and the persons who took part in it. "Communard" is the most frequently used, and it might well be adopted in English to take the place of the misleading Communist. It is generally used by adversaries of the movement. Its defenders seem to prefer "Communeux," which Littré says is also used as a term of disparagement, but it is found in the Socialist journals in their praises of the Commune in such phrases as "La grandeur de la Révolution Communeuse." "Communaliste" is also sometimes used. Unlettered French people during the siege used to apply the epithet Communiste to the members of the Commune, just as educated Englishmen do. This use of it occurs in one of M. Ludovic Halévy's sketches describing the siege, and he informed me it was constantly used by the same class of the populace which spoke of the *armistice* as the *amnistie*, suggesting the penal vicissitudes which they or their friends had undergone. It is possible that the English association of Communism with revolutionary outbreaks in Paris was originally a reminiscence of 1848 when the Communists played a certain part in the insurrectionary movements.

¹ Enquête parlementaire sur l'Insurrection du 18 Mars; Déposition de M. Floquet.

² The evidence given before the Commission of the National Assembly on the Insurrection of the Commune contains much testimony like the following:—Nous avons pu remarquer qu'en Angleterre, en Allemagne, en Suisse, en Belgique, partout où des groupes d'ouvriers se forment, la tendance est communiste. La France seule envoya dans le congrès (1867) des délégués qui protestèrent contre les idées communistes"—Enquête sur le 18 Mars; Déposition de M. Tolain. (M. Tolain was an active member of the International.)

for local autonomy, or because of the association of collectivist ideas with the rising of 1871. They extol the Commune simply as the ensign of an insurrectionary movement which they would like to see repeated for their own purposes.

The complete harmony between the men of the Commune and the Socialists of the end of the century might be ascribed to evolution of opinion, impelling sincere revolutionaries to adopt one another's programmes, had not the interlude of Boulangism destroyed the plausible theory. A military adventurer, who never, when he was protected by the Radicals, professed either autonomic or collectivist tenets, touched the fancy of the public. So after he had been openly proclaimed by the Reactionaries as their instrument to restore monarchical government in France, the Socialists of Paris with one great voice elected him their member, and were nearly the means of establishing a dictatorship. A Radical candidate was proposed by the Government to catch the anti-clerical vote of the democracy. A Socialist trade-unionist came forward in the interest of the working class. But the proletariat of Paris scented revolution in the air, and thought that General Boulanger on his black horse would lead them to the attack of the existing order of things. So they forgot the doctrines of the Commune and of Collectivism, and intimated to the unadventurous adventurer that when he was ready to lead the insurrection, the party of disorder, two hundred thousand strong, was ready to follow him.¹

This attitude of the Socialists to a potential military dictator must be carefully noted. It shows, first, that the Socialist democracy of Paris is willing to throw to the winds every article

¹ This election for Paris in January 1889, being held before the abolition of scrutin-de-liste, which it hastened, was participated in by the entire capital. In spite of the strongest official pressure in favour of M. Jacques, the Radical candidate of the Government, General Boulanger received 244,000 votes against 162,000 given to M. Jacques, while the Socialist polled only 16,900. Of the Boulangist majority it is impossible that more than 30,000 were reactionary votes, and to ascribe 200,000 of them to the Socialist and Revolutionary electors is certainly a moderate calculation. These figures may be instructively compared with the classification of Parisian voters on p. 638, and should also be borne in mind in connection with the anti-militarist professions of the Socialists during the Dreyfus agitation.

in its programme for the sake of procuring a revolution, without reflection as to its ultimate results. It also throws light on the foreboding of those who think that the growth of Socialism may drive the nation to take refuge in Cæsarism. The fear of the party of disorder, in the face of parliamentary anarchy, might induce the bourgeoisie and the peasantry to hail as a saviour a popular hero. But if he touched the public fancy the Revolutionaries also might join in the acclamation, as they did at the Boulangist epoch. The dread of Socialism was one of the potent causes to drive France into the arms of Louis Napoleon; but his struggle with the democracy of Paris was very short. Three weeks after he had swept the Boulevards with his cannon and his musketry, the working men of the capital made little protest at the plebiscite which condoned the Coup d'État. Thus, an uncompromising enemy of the regime, M. Jules Favre, used to throw in the teeth of the working classes the reproach that they were responsible for the deeds of the Empire,—they who had made it.¹

The attitude of the Socialists in Parliament and the language of their press does not dispel the idea that revolutionary disorder, and not social reform, is the end of the party. In spite of the insurrectionary tendencies of the democracy of Paris and of other centres, if the Socialist movement had produced political leaders of lucid aims and of sober resoluteness, the wayward passions of the people might have been organised into a force capable of compelling a solution of certain social problems which confront all modern communities,—though they are probably less pressing in France than elsewhere. But the endeavour of the politicians seems to be to aggravate the incoherency of the populace in order to dissimulate their own. Nor do they impress the world with their sensibility to the real sufferings of the people who toil, and a stranger, bent on studying the subject with open mind, will not derive much aid from the official press of the party.

The *Petite République* for several years was, as it boasted, the

¹ "Messieurs les ouvriers, vous seuls avez fait l'Empire: à vous seuls de le défaire." Jules Favre.—*Manifestation du Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle après la bataille de Mentana*, 4 Novembre 1867.

only daily organ of the entire Socialist party. Its articles were signed by all the conspicuous deputies of the party, by eminent municipal councillors of Paris, and by the chiefs of its sects, including MM. Jaurès, Guesde, Brousse, and Allemane. Yet its perusal, far from affording some definite idea of what these philosophers wanted, only gave the general idea that they had a revolution in view. Week after week, with rare exceptions, the leading articles were not to be distinguished from those printed in other violent journals of every shade of politics. The iniquities of ministers of the Republic were more often the subject of attack than the inequalities in the lot of its citizens. On such occasions it was instructive to cut out and compare in parallel columns the diatribes of the Socialist and anti-clerical *Petite République*, of the anti-Semitic and Catholic *Libre Parole*, of the Imperialist *Autorité*, and of the *Intransigeant*, which represents the special tenets of M. Henri Rochefort. An expert in the styles of the Boulevards would at once recognise the invective of that storm-tossed nobleman, the favourite epithets of M. Paul de Cassagnac, or the more sonorous abuse of M. Drumont. But, in pondering the substance of the essays which display to France the volcanic beauties of unlicensed printing, the unlearned would not detect that one of them was the voice of the inspired organ of social reform. Its other pages might contain a paragraph relating to a strike at Carmaux, or a congress at Marseilles, such as would appear in other morning journals. Its record of news would differ only in its announcements of a meeting of the "League for promoting Atheism" at Belleville, or an account of a "Civil Baptism" at Montmartre¹—chronicles agreeable to the anti-clerical reader, but having little pertinence to Collectivism or other social doctrines.²

¹ The following is a typical example of such announcements in the *Petite République*:—"Société de Baptême civil et de propagande d'athéisme.—Maison du Peuple. La Société organise un orchestre destiné à prendre part aux fêtes anticléricales. Elle adresse un chaleureux appel à tous les musiciens socialistes. Écrire, pour tout ce qui concerne la Société, au citoyen A. Létrillard, secrétaire général."

² Since this page was written in 1897 the violent press of Paris, including all the journals mentioned here, have devoted their columns to the discussion of the

What distinguished it from other vehement journals, Republican or Reactionary, was its publication, unabridged, of speeches made by Socialist leaders at banquets or in Parliament, and the perusal of the latter leads us to consider the position and action of the party in the Legislature. To a stranger who frequents the Chamber the difference between the Socialist deputies and other members of Parliament is not striking. This is not surprising, as the Socialists who have been longest in the House have previously sat in other groups. Moreover all the members of the party belong by origin to the same class as the majority of deputies—that is to say, they are chiefly journalists, professors, or lawyers. Thus the reproach sometimes thrown at the Socialists by Moderate Republicans, that they are professional politicians, can be equally applied to those who make it. A juster criticism of the group is that, considering its popular pretensions, it contains few representatives of labour who have ever earned a livelihood by manual toil. As to the demeanour of the Socialists in the pursuit of their legislative duties, it is not much more boisterous than that of other deputies who are not of the party of violence. There are Reactionaries at the other end of the Chamber who contest the uproarious superiority of the Extreme Left, and, what is more notable, the Royalists sometimes give tongue loudest to foment the eloquence of a Socialist. The sight of Monarchists, from the Vendée and Brittany, cheering the utterances of a Revolutionary attacking the Government, is instructive to those who have studied the history of parties under the Republic, particularly at the epoch of Boulangism.

In justice it must be said that all the harangues of the Socialists do not excite the applause of the Reactionaries. The Church is so often the object of their rage that the Abbé Lemire, a deputy for the Nord, who is sometime classed as a Christian Socialist, once remarked to his colleagues, whose Socialism is not thus qualified, that their anti-clerical zeal drove Dreyfus case to the exclusion of almost all other controversies. The *Petite République* has attacked the Anti-Semites, while the *Intransigeant* has joined the *Libre Parole* in supporting them. The defence of Jewish capitalists by the Socialist organ has been as edifying as the defence of the army by M. Rochefort.

into a secondary place in their minds all conception of social reform. In the Revolution, of which one of the chief bases was the principle of individual ownership, the confiscation of the possessions of the Church in 1789 is one of the rare acts which the Socialists like to quote. By false analogy they treat it as a nationalisation of private property. But though almost the sole encouragement which modern Collectivists find in the Revolution was its dispossession of the clergy, there is no natural connection whatever between anti-clerical sentiment and Socialist doctrine. The latter, indeed, is as abundant in the New Testament as it is inexistent in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. A Socialist has as much right to be an anti-clerical as he has to be a vegetarian, but neither quality increases the authenticity of his Socialism. The prominence which the group gives to its intolerant hate of religion is another of the many proofs that the chief aim of French Socialists is not the adjustment of economic inequalities to procure the greater happiness of mankind, but the subversion of society and of all institutions valued by any section of it.

To some of the propositions given forth by Socialist orators at the tribune no exception can be taken, but their conclusions are vague when they are not inconsequent. It is always a pleasure to hear M. Jaurès, whose eloquence in the Chamber,¹ when he sat there, was second only to that of M. de Mun; but that truant from the Left Centre might be persuasive if he were only lucid. His exposition of a theme is often masterly; his images are magnificent; his rhetoric is of classic form worthy of a brilliant pupil of the École Normale, and his hearers feel themselves elevated with him into a lofty atmosphere. He takes them, indeed, up into an exceeding high mountain; but from the summit he shows them only an expanse of mist, amid which phantoms and confused figures flit. His arraignment of the public corruption which arose out of the Panama affair was in

¹ M. Jaurès being the most distinguished member of the Socialist party and a brilliant ornament of the Chamber lost his seat at the elections of 1898, in harmony with the tradition which I have mentioned of the incompatibility of a Parliamentary career in France with distinction.

some respects admirable. But because politicians of the same social class as M. Jaurès had been tempted by the facilities offered by the parliamentary system to rob a commercial enterprise, it was not easy to prove that the practical remedy for such evils is the transformation of all private capital into one unique collective capital. His attack some years later on the sugar-bounties, in its exposure of the defects of the costly protective policy, was a tribute to his training in the school of which M. Léon Say was the recognised master. The splendour of the historical châteaux purchased by sugar-refiners, the triumphs of their racing-stables, and the prodigal exploits of their progeny, do not console the French consumer for the dearth of his sugar. But it is a difficult task for a State-socialist to disparage the practices of a Protectionist Government, for their first principles are identical.¹ So M. Jaurès, unable to bring his thesis to its logical conclusion, that Free Trade is beneficial for an industrial nation, had nothing better to propose as a substitute for bounties than a nebulous scheme of State monopoly of the sugar industry.

Sometimes when the Socialist leader went among his constituents he revealed his consciousness of the vanity of expounding economical doctrines, or even of wrapping them in sophistry. Then when the banquet was ended, and ardent words had inflamed men's fancies, as it is easy so to do in popular assemblies in a land of revolution, the refined philosopher who had modelled his artificial style on Isocrates, and had trained his intellect, to little purpose indeed, in the dialectic of Aristotle, had no better exhortation, from ancient or modern science, to give his humble disciples waiting to be taught than "*Dansons la Carmagnole ! vive le son du canon !*" Thus is the aim of the Socialist movement in France, a century after the Terror, indicated and summed up by its most authoritative leader. The dancers who invented the Carmagnole in 1792, and the grim musicians who piped to them, had no thought of State-socialism, or of Collectivism, or of

¹ "*Les protectionnistes sont des socialistes qui ont cinquante mille francs de rente.*"—Bastiat.

any of the official creeds which are vaguely professed in the Extreme Left of the Chamber under the Third Republic. His evocation of the cannon to accompany the measure having been misunderstood, M. Jaurès afterwards explained, referring to the text of the poem, that it was not an incitement to civil war, but a reminiscence of the artillery of the Revolution, which was pointed at the enemies of France. That interpretation, by the author, of an ambiguous passage in his oratory opens a wide horizon of conjecture; for history sometimes repeats itself, and we all know of the young Corsican gunner who first directed his batteries against the invader the year after the Carmagnole came in fashion. It may be that a European war may solve some of the social questions which agitate France by producing a new organiser of Revolution. Meanwhile the Socialist representatives in Parliament do not aid the student in forecasting a peaceful solution of the agitation, either by their speeches or their writings. One may indeed read them for instruction of manners, but it is vain to apply them to establish any doctrine.

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